

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**Wednesday 6 April 2011**

**Question by Mike Harrison to**

**Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance and Health Reform**

"It is now April 2011 and we at KCC are still working with the Microsoft programme of 1993-2003! We, Members and staff, are constantly being asked by our ISG Team to clean up work areas as the server is either at critical or is full.

We were told some while ago that all of our inbox emails are over full and that they would be 'cleaned' by ISG on a monthly basis! This does not appear to be happening and I know that some of my fellow Members and for that matter staff have way in excess of 1500 opened emails still active in their Inbox. This is a situation that cannot continue and some form of control has to be instigated.

My question to the Cabinet Member for Business Strategic & Support is in two parts:

- (i) When (allowing for financial restraints) will we, KCC, be looking to upgrade the entire system?
- (ii) Is there anyway that ISG can assist or rather help those Members and staff to enable them to control the amount of active emails on their systems?"

**Answer**

Hardware replacement is being implemented as part of the ICT capital investment programme. This will include the introduction of increased storage capacity from May 2011, to be followed by an email archiving solution. This will address the additional demand for both email and shared document storage in support of council services.

The process of migrating to new software versions is expensive and in the absence of a compelling business case the council, in common with many other organisations, choose not to upgrade to Microsoft's Vista operating system or Office 2007. While software functionality continues to meet operating requirements there is little rationale for change. The council's email servers are due to be replaced in autumn 2011 and the intention is to upgrade to the latest software as part of the same project.

The introduction of additional capacity and associated archiving will allow individual members and staff more options in how to manage email and other electronic storage. As the content of electronic files is only visible to the recipient, the decision on how this is managed can only remain with the individual. Advice is published on the council's intranet to assist and guide on best practice. Additional support for individual staff and members can be accessed through the ICT service desk.

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**Question by Andrew Bowles to**

**Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development**

Can the Cabinet Member tell me what is the County Council doing to help rural communities who have either no or extremely slow broadband services? And can he tell me what can the County Council do to encourage broadband providers to support these communities?"

**Answer**

There is growing concern from Kent and Medway's businesses and communities over the availability and quality of broadband access. Currently a third of rural businesses and communities cannot get the basic standard of 2mb broadband access.

Published data on future private sector investment makes it clear that most of Kent's rural areas will not benefit from Next Generation Access (superfast broadband) under current investment models. Given that 40% of Kent's businesses are located in rural parts of the County, and contribute over £5.5 billion per annum to Kent's economy, this is a major barrier to future economic growth. It also creates substantive challenges in terms of future public service delivery and social outcomes – given that almost one in three of Kent's residents live in rural areas.

Current estimates suggest that the investment shortfall to deliver fibre (effectively unlimited bandwidth) to all properties in Kent (where the market will either not respond or respond too slowly) is in the order of £500 million-£1.1 billion.

Kent has developed a strong track record in developing innovative solutions to local broadband infrastructure issues. The Connecting Kent Programme has reduced the number of properties without broadband from 37,958 to 14,669, whilst the Community Broadband Grants Programme has funded a number of local solutions – including work in Selling and Iwade which has been identified within the Government's new broadband strategy as best practice. More recently, KCC has launched a new £1.6 million scheme to pilot 15 innovative 'proof of concept' models for delivering superfast broadband in rural areas. Strong interest has been received to date and we are looking to announce the first five successful pilot locations on the 20<sup>th</sup> May. KCC is also working with Medway and the Districts to submit a £40 million bid for additional rural broadband infrastructure funding to Broadband Delivery UK.

These schemes are creating new opportunities to encourage alternative local suppliers to provide innovative solutions to rural broadband access issues. In addition we are continuing to meet with BT to ensure that they are fully aware of the need for greater investment in Kent's broadband infrastructure.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**Wednesday, 6 April 2011**

**Question by Leslie Christie to**

**Paul Carter, Leader of the Council**

Will the Leader of the Council give the number of Interim Directors who were in post during March 2011? What was the cost to the Council of these posts during the month? What were the daily rates the Council were paying for these posts?

**Answer**

There were 4 external interim Directors in post during March 2011. The daily rate ranged from £750 to £1250. These figures include the cost paid to the interim agency through which the individuals were sourced. The cost to the Council during the month was £69,925.

The answer to this question should be linked to a similar question from Martin Vye and I will be commenting further on the essential need for high quality interim managers as we go about the change programme, which I will be referring to in greater detail as part of my Leader's address.

**Wednesday 6 April 2011**

**Question by Martin Vye to**

**Paul Carter, Leader of the Council**

Given the taxpaying public's concerns about high pay in the public sector and the revelation that sums of more than £1,000 per day are being paid by the Council to several senior officers in interim posts, would the Leader of the Council ensure that Cabinet Members provide all Members with details of the work done justifying the payment of these sums, especially as the rate paid is often more than double that of the anticipated weekly salary for the equivalent permanent Corporate Director position.

**Answer**

I do not recognise the figure Mr Vye quotes in his question. When the total cost of the employment package for the ex-Managing Director for CFE is compared to the costs of the two interim Corporate Directors covering the revised posts, his figures do not add up.

The total weekly cost of the ex MD for CFE, including employer on-costs, was around £5300. This does not include sick pay or the cost of redundancy. The weekly cost of the interim Corporate Director Families and Social Care is almost exactly the same and for the interim Corporate Director Education, Learning & Skills is £3900.

I am in no doubt that we get value for money from our consultants. In every case, they have been set stretching, measurable, ambitious targets to achieve. In many cases they have delivered outcomes that could not have been achieved by substantive members of staff due to the nature of the work. Interims by definition are used to coming into an organisation and achieving quick outcomes. Each of the interims that we have recently engaged have proven and credible track records in similar Authorities.

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**Wednesday 6 April 2011**

**Question by Dan Daley to**

**John Simmonds, Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement**

There is running currently a very prominent national newspaper campaign to retain the 'First Past the Post' system of voting. These advertisements are taking whole pages in all of the national newspapers and possibly even provincial papers too.

In the cause of transparency in democracy, efforts have been made to discover exactly who is paying for these advertisements – which must by their very size, frequency and number – be costing many thousands if not hundreds of thousands of pounds in advertising and design charges.

In view of the extremely partisan Motion on our papers today asking for this Council to endorse the 'No 2 AV' Campaign – can the Cabinet Member please assure me that the County Council has not **and will not** be contributing to this national newspaper campaign advertising?

**Answer**

To give Mr Daley and his colleagues peace of mind, I can confirm that the County Council has not contributed to the national newspaper campaign to retain the first past the post system, and has no plans to do so in the future.

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**Wednesday 6 April 2011**

**Question by Trudy Dean to**

**Jenny Whittle, Cabinet Member for Children's Special Services**

Can the Cabinet Member please explain the circumstances under which 286 children in 2008/9, and 327 children in 2009/10, went missing out of care in Kent?

**Answer**

During the years 2008/09 to 2009/10, looked after children who were missing from placement without permission for more than 6 hours were formally classed as 'missing children'. The vast majority of those children subsequently returned safely to their placements. For those who did not return quickly, further action was initiated to locate them.

Our system for recording these incidents was previously inadequate because the details of the child's return were only recorded in the child's case note. Therefore retrieval of the information in aggregate form was very difficult to achieve. During recent months this deficiency was identified by staff and a new system to record missing children is being developed and will go live on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

Information relating to all children and young people who are reported as missing is now recorded by Kent police on their computer system called COMPACT. A joint protocol has been in place between Kent police and Kent and Medway Children's Social Services (since 2006) to share information about children/young people who go missing. Kent Safeguarding Children Board are in the process of reviewing the protocols relating to all children/young people who go missing; not just looked after children, but also those who live at home with their families.

Following a successful pilot in the East Kent Police Area, a best practice model has been developed whereby the police and children's social services meet monthly to review and identify the TOP 10 children/young people (not just KCC LAC) who have been most frequently reported missing from that area, so that these high risk children have appropriate support and interventions in place. It is intended for this model to be replicated in all police areas across Kent.

In addition Kent Children's Social Services have in place an Alert system to inform the responsible District Manager and Head of Service when a KCC LAC goes missing.

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**Wednesday 6 April 2011**

**Question by Elizabeth Green to**

**Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities**

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me if there is any truth in rumours that Kent Libraries are to be reduced in number next year?

**Answer**

There are no plans to close libraries next year. We are engaging in a review of the Library Service and we will be consulting widely on our proposals later in the summer with the people of Kent and, of course, local Members. The result of that consultation will help to shape the Library Service of the future.