

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of A meeting of the Communities Policy Overview Committee held at Darent Room - Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 2nd June, 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs S V Hohler (Chairman), Mr T J Birkett (Vice-Chairman), Mr R H C Bliss, Mr G Cowan, Mr A R Chell, Mr D A Hirst, Mr C J Law, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr M J Northey, Mrs E D Rowbotham, Mr G Rowe, Mrs E M Tweed and Mr M J Angell (Substitute for Mr R E King)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms C Anley (Head of Libraries), Ms J Edwards (Director of Policy and Resources), Mr I Forward (Head of Adult Education), Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mr K MacKenney (Regeneration Officer), Mr P Round (Senior Projects Manager) and Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance and Asset Management)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

76. Chairman's announcements

(1) Mrs Hohler welcomed the new Members and Vice-Chairman to the Committee. She mentioned that the Directorate was diverse and covered fourteen business units and emphasised that it was up to the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Liberal Democrat Spokesman to make sure that the agenda reflected this wide range of business. She stated that they would welcome suggestions for future agenda items from Members.

(2) The Chairman stated that in relation to declarations of interest she had registered a declaration with the County Council as a Board Member of the Turner Contemporary Arts Trust, and as a Board Member of Culture South East, an independent appointment, and of Arts Council South East. She said that she would feedback to this Committee on information from these organisations.

77. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April and 15 May 2008 (Item. A5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2008 and 15 May 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

78. Portfolio Holder and Managing Director's Oral Update
(Item. B1)

(1) Mr Hill updated Members on the following issues:

Kent Library and History Centre

(2) Mr Hill reported that the project was still at a delicate commercial stage and therefore he was only able to give a brief verbal update at this time but he undertook to give a full report at a later date.

(3) He stated that the launch had taken place on 17 April and was available on Kent TV. Mr Hill gave some background to the project and advised that it is being funded by working with a property developer who was prepared to build residential accommodation on two KCC owned sites in Maidstone. The sites were the remainder of the Springfield site currently occupied by the County Central Library and Library and Arts Headquarters and the currently vacant James Whatman Way site. In return for these sites the developer would be asked to include in the development on the James Whatman Way site the Library and History centre.

(4) Mr Hill set out the key dates for this development as follows:

- Signing off the Heads of Terms - shortly.
- Planning permission - Autumn 2008
- On-site early 2009
- Open 2011

(5) Mr Hill answered questions from Members on this proposal. It was clarified by Mr Shipton that there was £4m in the budget funded from borrowing and that £6.66m was the estimated value of the two sites to be handed over to the developer. It was confirmed that KCC would retain the freehold for the Library and History Centre part of the James Whatman Way site. In a response to a question on whether the £4m within the budget also included costs for contingency arrangements, Mr Hill stated that when the Development Agreement was signed the final figure would be confirmed and that the contractor would bear the risks.

Other matters

(6) Mr Hill mentioned the following key issues for the Directorate:

- Kent Libraries had retained their Charter-Mark status and, following the assessment, five areas of Best Practice had been recognised.
- The National Year of Reading had started on 24 April 2008
- Good progress was being made with the Ashford and Tenterden Gateways.
- There had been a meeting between Cabinet Members and the Youth County Council. He was pleased with the progress of the Youth County Council which had good agendas. At this meeting the young people had reported on their three most important issues which were (1) bullying, (2) a leisure pass along the lines of the freedom pass and (3) advice for young people on how to handle internet access safely. A debate was

being arranged between the County Council and the Youth County Council in the Autumn in relation to alcohol.

- The Creative Foundation in Folkestone, with support from KCC, had successfully bid to be part of the five hour cultural pilot for young people. This is one of only ten pilots across the country and one of two in the South East.
- The Paralympics Pre-Games training camps for 2012 had been announced and there were eight sites in Kent (including one in Medway).
- The Dover Torch Campaign was gaining momentum and was recently supported by colleagues in the Pas de Calais.
- The tender for Turner Contemporary was to go out on or after 19 June 2008. It was expected that work would start on site in October 2008.

(7) Mr Hill answered questions which included the following:

- Mr Hill confirmed that the funding that the County Council hoped to get from SEEDA for Turner Contemporary was new funding.
- A Member emphasised the importance of ensuring that there were adequate transport facilities for young people, and although the importance of the freedom pass was recognised it was important that there were adequate bus services.
- A Member sought assurance about the partnership between the Youth County Council and District Youth Forums to ensure that these were not disjointed and to encourage closer working relationships. Another Member referred to the good working relationship that exists between the Youth County Council and the Dover Youth Forum who were working together. The Youth Advisory Group was mentioned.
- A Member reminded colleagues that Hilary Lister was due to start her solo sail around Britain in her specially adapted boat on Monday 9 June 2008 from Dover Harbour. If Members would like to go along could they contact Mr Hespe.

(8) RESOLVED That the updates be noted

79. Exclusion of Press and Public - Confidential Item

RESOLVED That on the direction of Ofsted discussion of its findings on the County Council's Enhanced Youth Inspection had been classified as "confidential" under the terms of the Access to Information Act 1984. This is because Ofsted has placed an embargo on its report until its publication on 3 June 2008.

80. Managing Directors update

(1) Ms Honey updated Members on two important inspections for the Communities Directorate.

Youth Offending Service

(2) This was a very intensive inspection with thirty inspectors looking at a hundred and six case files for a service with a budget of over £6m. Eight judgements were made in the inspection, and Youth Offending Services were awarded four 'good' and four 'adequate'. In this latest tranche of inspections only

four Youth Offending Services had scored higher and these were much smaller authorities. It had been acknowledged by the inspectors that a lot of the issues that had been identified were already being addressed by the Directorate. The draft action plan would be published within the next week or so and would come to the next meeting of the POC for debate. She gave as an example of the issues being addressed accommodation for young people. Too many young people left care and went straight into bed and breakfast. There was a need to address this issue via District Councils. In relation to Mental Health Services for young people Ms Honey reported that West Kent had funded an additional worker to bring it up to an equal strength with East Kent.

Enhanced Youth Inspection

(3) Ms Honey reminded Members that this document was embargoed until 3 June 2008. She stated that the Directorate were very pleased with the results of the inspection and she gave Members some examples of the comments that had been made in the report. She expressed her thanks to her management team, heads of service and frontline staff. She stated that she accepted that there were areas for improvement coming out of the report, although the 2008/09 unit plan addressed many of the issues raised by the inspectors.

(4) A Member referred to the success of the Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) and stated that these could be enhanced by establishing delegated funding to YAGS. Ms Honey referred to partnership working other than YAGs and that the Youth Opportunity Fund was available to young people and was a significant sum of money. She stated there would be a review of YAGs and this could cover funding. This was supported by Mr Hill.

(5) A Member referred to the proposed Select Committee Review on provision of activities for young people which was due to start its work in the Autumn and suggested that much of its information was already available via Youth Forums and the KYCC.

(6) Ms Honey reminded Members that it had been decided to bring together all this Directorate's young persons services under Ms Slaven, Director of Youth Offending And Substance Misuse

(7) RESOLVED that the update be noted

81. Meeting in open session

The meeting continued in open session

82. Financial Monitoring 2007/08 *(Item. B2)*

(1) Mr Shipton submitted the Directorate's financial monitoring report for the third quarter, which included issues identified in subsequent exception reports. The table in the report showed the net variance as an amount and also as a percentage as requested at the last meeting.

(2) Mr Shipton highlighted that the main area of concern continued to be the Adult Education Service which had not been able to reduce spend in line with the Learning and Skills Council's funding reductions, had not been able to repay the loan to cover previous year's deficits and had faced lower than expected enrolments leading to a reduction in fee income. He identified two other areas at risk of overspend: the Coroners Service and the Arts Unit. In relation to the Coroners service Members expressed concern about KCC having to fund a service that was not within KCC's control but was in our budget for historical reasons. Mr Bainbridge informed Members that, in conjunction with other local authorities in a similar situation, they were lobbying the Local Government Association to take this issue up and had also lobbied Kent MPs.

(3) Mr Shipton also drew Members' attention to the additional expenditure on the day to day building maintenance budget which was forecast to overspend by £130,000 over and above that reported in the March report to Cabinet. He stated that the Directorate were planning to cover this overspend, the deficit rollover from previous years, and a number of other one-off issues that had arisen during the year affecting the central budget, from reviewing reserves.

(4) RESOLVED that the projected outturn for the Directorate as per the May Exemption Monitoring Report to Cabinet be noted.

83. KCC Annual Plan 2008/09

(Item. B3)

(1) The Committee received a report presented by Ms Edwards which set out the background and processes for publishing the KCC Annual Plan 2008/09. A copy of the latest draft, with the areas that related to the work of the Communities Directorate highlighted, was attached to enable Members to make comments prior to its approval at County Council on 19 June 2008. Members were asked to note the Policy Framework Documents that would be in the scope of this Committee as set out in Appendix 11.

(2) Ms Edwards reported that this was the last year that the County Council was required to publish an Annual Plan (Best Value Performance Plan). Officers were waiting until July 2008 for the Comprehensive Area Assessment Consultation to see what the new requirements were likely to be. She stated that there would be a report in September 2008 on the Towards 2010 target and the performance of all service units within the Directorate.

(3) Members asked questions which related to the following issues:

- Further information on the Buy with Confidence Scheme run by Trading Standards was sought and how KCC encouraged good traders to get involved on this scheme even though they may already have plenty of work. Mr Bainbridge stated that the scheme was operated across the GOSE Region. It has been advertised on local radio and they hoped that the uptake from traders would increase.
- A Member asked that items covered in the Annual Plan should be covered within the Policy Overview Committee Programme during the year. As

there were a number of new Members on this Committee an induction was requested. Ms Edwards agreed to arrange this.

- The Chairman drew attention to the Folkestone Triennial Event which would run from 14 June to 14 September and would be the most significant arts event in the South East.
- It was suggested that the Canterbury Tourist Website should also have links to Margate and Folkestone and vice versa.
- A Member mentioned work that was going on within the local community to obtain funding for reusing buildings in the Elvington area, building on that area's rich history.
- In relation to target 61 - (extend our public awareness campaign to alert people to the activities of rogue traders, particularly those involved in door-to-door sales, and increase the number of offenders prosecuted), a Member drew colleagues' attention to the potential for Members to use funding available to them to assist with this.

(4) RESOLVED That:-

(a) the arrangements for publishing the KCC Annual Plan 2008/09 be noted.

(b) the general comments made by Members about areas of the Directorate work be noted.

(c) an induction for Members of the Committee on the work of the Directorate be arranged.

84. Turner Contemporary - Regeneration Impact *(Item. B4)*

(1) The Committee received a report presented by Mr Round and Mr MacKenney which outlined the expected regeneration impact of Turner Contemporary. The report covered issues around Margate's regeneration, the Eastern Seafront Proposal, strengthening the cultural strategy, new jobs, businesses and confidence, strengthening education, community and civic pride, and Turner Contemporary and wider development.

(2) Members then asked questions which included the following:

- The question of access by train and parking for visitors by car was raised. Officers confirmed that work was underway with partners who were all very well aware of the issues of parking. They were considering this in relation to all of the attractions and developments as well as Turner Contemporary. A survey of parking spaces had been carried out which showed that there were always a significant number of spaces available in Margate. It was important to ensure adequate signage existed to direct people to these car parks and also to ensure that the quality of the spaces was such that people wished to use them. It was suggested by Members that maybe there could be a Park & Ride type service introduced.

- Members were reassured that as part of the planning permission for the 165 units and the 4-star hotel there will be a requirement for adequate parking to be available on site.
- It was confirmed that there was not a proposal to establish a connection with the Turner prize. However there is a close relationship with the Tate who have a large number of Turner paintings, which will be important in ensuring that there will be a constant Turner presence in the gallery.
- Reassurance was sought that there would be adequate national publicity for Turner Contemporary and, in particular, that efforts would be made to ensure that those whose voice was influential in the art world were onboard. It was confirmed that a major piece of work had been commissioned to look at a publicity strategy which would detail and address the issues raised.
- Members hoped that there would be an opportunity for Arts and Education for the local community arising out of Turner Contemporary and this was confirmed.
- It was confirmed that the building would be of a good environmental standard.
- A further assurance was sought that as far as possible labour for constructing the building would come from the local community. It was confirmed that although it was not possible to formally get the contractor to impose a quota of local workers, work would be done with the contractor to encourage him to use as much local labour as possible.
- The importance of Turner Contemporary to the regeneration of the whole of East Kent was emphasised. It was acknowledged that the regeneration and economic impact would be wider than Margate.
- A Member raised the issue of the importance of ensuring the sustainability of Turner Contemporary as an attraction and to encourage people to visit more than once. In response to this Officers stated that the key was to ensure constantly changing exhibitions of extremely high quality. They were aiming for people to visit at least two or three times a year but this would be dependant upon the exhibitions.
- In response to a question about advertising and promotion, Officers stated that they believed that they had a budget which compared well with other galleries.
- Members were reminded that "Visit Kent" now had a co-ordinating role in relation to tourism and included an effective booking system. (Mr Long declared an interest as a Director of Visit Kent and took part in the discussions).

(3) In conclusion officers referred to the report where it was stated that Turner Contemporary and the major associated developments would clearly have a considerable catalytic effect on the regeneration of Margate. Developments on the eastern seafront would have a huge impact on the town's image and tourism offer and would lead to significant jobs. Key aspects in addition to Turner Contemporary and the associated developments would be the Dreamland Heritage Theme Park and the recognition of the old town as a creative quarter. Together these would help Margate's future economy and social prosperity.

(4) RESOLVED that the report and comments made by Members be noted.

85. National Year of Reading
(Item. B5)

(1) Ms Anley presented a report which aimed to raise awareness of the National Year of Reading 2008 and its significance to KCC and Kent as a whole. The report also highlighted progress in planning for the National Year of Reading in Kent and sought to engage the Policy Overview Committee in championing this scheme. Particularly emphasis was placed on the importance of literacy skills to Kent's economy and community wellbeing. It was noted that the National Year of Reading would run from April to December 2008.

(2) The Book Start leaflet was circulated at the meeting.

(3) Members asked questions which included the following points:

- The importance of this being a National Year of Reading and Learning was emphasised.
- Members asked for confirmation that the scheme complied with the diversity agenda and also that there was an awareness of the issues around dyslexia. The importance of using plain English in relation to public services was emphasised.
- The traditional emphasis within schools for the type of reading material that tended to appeal more to girls than boys was mentioned as was the importance of supplying the sort of written material that boys would want to read.
- A Member referred to the need in rural communities to identify facilities i.e. book rooms, which the communities could set up themselves.
- Members were reassured that all volunteers working through the library service to assist children with reading were put through an enhanced CRB Check.

(4) RESOLVED that:-

(a) that the Committee supports the National Year of Reading and in particular recognises the importance of literacy skills to Kent's economy and community wellbeing.

(b) the comments made by Members be noted.

86. Adult Education Fee Structure
(Item.B6)

(1) Mr Forward presented a report which informed Members that the 2008/09 Adult Education course programme was in the final phase of completion and final decisions on individual course fees were being taken. Circulated at the meeting was a progress report on business development.

(2) Mr Forward reminded Members that over the past three years course prices paid by users had risen by an average of 45%. In the current academic year 2007/08 enrolments had failed to match expectations and at the end of the programme year as at 31 July there was an anticipated fall in student numbers of

approximately 500 compared with 2006/07 figures. There were a number of reasons for this shortfall which appeared to be a national trend.

(3) In order to deliver the £250,000 increase in income described in the medium term plan this service has devised a strategy to reverse the decline in participation and achieve the income target and the ways of doing this were set out in the report and further explained to Members. Also in the report were details of the concessions available.

(4) Members asked a number of questions and made comments to Officers which included the following:

- The importance of ensuring that those who needed to make up for deficiencies in learning from school could do so via Adult Education, and that the fees were not prohibitive, was emphasised. Members were reminded of the concessions available to ensure that people on low income had access to programmes. Although Kent's fees are high the policy for people on low incomes was amongst the most liberal and generous. It was also pointed out that Kent was very successful in encouraging people who were anxious about participating in adult education and learning.
- The title 'Adult Education' was raised and the need to looking at changing the name was acknowledged by Officers.
- A Member stated that there was a shortage of sign language interpreters and maybe this was something that the adult education could help to address. In relation to sign language it was pointed out that there were 15 courses for this around the County. Another Member suggested that maybe this was something that young people could be encouraged to engage with.
- The issue of older people needing to remain in the workplace or to return to the workplace to supplement their pension was raised and the need to ensure that courses exist to provide them with suitable skills.
- The issue of making sure that Adult Education courses were accessible for older adults and especially that they formed a part of a strategy to assist with dementia was raised. Also, the importance of engaging with people who had influence over the older persons' services was mentioned. Officers stated that 48% of all adult education learners were over 60. One of the reasons for this was the universal concessions policy. Officers were also aware of the importance of the value of education in the public health agenda and were looking to target older learners.
- The importance of providing Adult Education services accessible to those with learning disabilities and the courses that they would be interested in was mentioned. It was pointed out by officers that some of these courses were funded by the Learning and Skills Council. This was an area of concern for Officers as they did not know whether these courses would be able to continue if they were not funded by the Learning and Skills Council.
- Members stated that often courses were run for subjects that were recreational. However, Officers stated that with a large number of courses such as Floral Art, the majority of people attending wanted to run small businesses or supplement their income by learning this skill and it was a minority who were doing this purely for recreation. Mr Forward stated that one of the strengths of the Local Authority Adult Education

Services was that it was able to meet a variety of needs within the same course.

- A Member expressed the view that consideration should be given to reducing fees to increase yield and that a judgement should be taken on what it was reasonable to charge.
- The importance of having courses such as History of Art to complement Turner Contemporary was mentioned and the possibility of running these courses within Turner Contemporary was discussed.
- The good work being done in Adult Education to encourage older people, who did not achieve during their formal education, to make up for this by taking Adult Education courses was acknowledged. The role and importance of learning champions and sharing personal experiences were mentioned.
- In response to a suggestion that Adult Education should build upon the current interest in gardening/allotments and cookery, the officer stated that this need tended to be addressed through television programmes.
- Another area of interest to the public as demonstrated by popular television programmes was dancing and it was confirmed that there were a number of courses available.
- Also mentioned was growing interest in creative crafts and there were relevant courses in the Adult Education programme
- It was suggested that use could be made of the internet to deliver Adult Education on line. The Officers stated that what tended to happen was blended learning so that people came along to an Adult Education course and then practiced outside the course using websites. There was also the opportunity to talk to others on message boards.
- A Member suggested that there could be more integration between Adult Education and schools and that programmes could be run within the school. The Officer stated that this had been successfully trialled in Canterbury where a programme of curriculum enhancement had been designed. It was hoped that this could be extended to other areas.

(5) RESOLVED that the approach to pricing of courses, the management of fee levels and the comments made by Members be noted.

87. Select Committees - update

(Item. C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the current situation regarding the Select Committees on Alcohol Misuse, Accessing Democracy and a new Select Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorder. Members were informed that a conference on Alcohol Misuse was being organised to take place on 10 July. This was a partnership conference which included organisations who had been involved with the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee Report.

(2) Members were updated on the outcomes from the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 23 May 2008. They were informed that an additional research officer was being recruited to support the Policy Overview Select Committees and interviews were being held on 5 June. It was anticipated that this officer would support the new Select Committee review on the Provision of Activities for Young People which had been put forward by this Policy Overview Committee. It was confirmed that work on this Select Committee Review would

take place as soon as the Officer was in post. Members were also informed that a cross-party group of Members was going to be established for each new Select Committee to work with the research Officer to hone and refine the terms of reference scope, etc. of a review as soon as the review was agreed prior to the inaugural meeting of the Select Committee.

(3) Another outcome of the meeting 23 May 2008 was that an Informal Member Group had been set up to discuss issues such as the timetabling of the Policy Overview Committees in 2009. It would look at conflicting issues in relation to timetabling such as the financial monitoring report and key policy documents.

(4) The Chairman asked Members if they would like to hold some of their meetings outside of County Hall. The view of the majority was that meetings should be held at County Hall but to that visits should be arranged so that the Committee could see key areas of the Communities Directorate's work.

(3) RESOLVED that the update be noted.