

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 Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 1 April 2011.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr A R Chell, Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr P J Homewood, Mrs J P Law, Mr S Manion (Substitute for Mr N J Collor), Mr M B Robertson, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr K Smith, Mr M V Snelling, Mrs E M Tweed Mrs C J Waters

ALSO PRESENT: Mr K G Lynes, Mr J A Kite Mr M A Wickham

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director of Business and Support), Ms B Cooper (Director of Economic Development) Miss T Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

64. Membership

(Item A2)

Members noted that Mr M B Robertson had joined the Committee in place of Mr I S Chittenden, and Mr N J Collor, Mr A Sandhu and Mrs C J Waters had joined in place of Mr J R Bullock, Mr K H Pugh and Mrs J A Rook.

65. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item A4)

Mr K Smith proposed and Mr S Manion seconded that Mr M B Robertson be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Carried by 8 votes to 1

Mr Robertson was duly elected.

66. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011

(Item A6)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman.

67. Presentation - Broadband

(Item B1)

Mrs E Harrison, Rural Regeneration Manager, and Mr B Taylor, ISG, were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Harrison and Mr Taylor presented a series of slides which set out the current situation and progress to date on enhancing Broadband access in Kent, and responded to comments and questions from Members.

2. The Cabinet Member, Mr Lynes, emphasised the number and range of Kent businesses which rely on good Broadband provision, as well as its importance in supporting education. The need and demand for Broadband increases constantly, and remote rural communities in particular need good access. Some of the best Broadband provision currently goes past Kent to France, and Kent needs to be able to access this provision.

3. In discussion, the following points were highlighted:-

- a) the key criteria for enhancing Broadband access are to boost the economy and support the provision of public services;
- b) good Broadband is vital to support the viability of Kent's businesses and to address other aspirations such as reducing travel and congestion by allowing more people to work from home;
- c) the public and local businesses need to have good information on services and options available;
- d) it is important to assess the possibility of installing Broadband alongside other utilities wherever possible, although there are practical issues to be addressed;
- e) Broadband should be listed amongst the POSC's most important issues;
- f) the officer team was congratulated on the progress made on enhancing Broadband access in Kent;
- g) some parts of remote rural locations still have no Broadband access, but need it to support job creation and community networks, such as services for the elderly and vulnerable; and
- h) although 100mb Broadband is an aspiration, it would be more realistic to aim for 40 or 50mb across as much of Kent as possible.

4. RESOLVED that the information set out in the presentation and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and that the POSC receive regular updates on progress made and on the rating of the issue amongst other Regeneration priorities.

68. Sandwich Economic Development Task Force - update report
(Item B2)

Mr K Smith declared an interest as a Director of the East Kent Spatial Development Company, and Mr S Manion declared an interest as a former employee of Pfizer.

1. Ms Cooper introduced the report and set out the work being undertaken to address issues for Pfizer staff and contracted research organisations based at the site and to assess the broader impact of the site closure on the East Kent economy. She responded to comments and questions from Members.

2. The Chairman congratulated the officer team and the Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Members on the extensive time and effort put in to identify and respond to the issues arising.

3. Points highlighted in discussion were as follows:-

- a) the experience of previous major industrial closures had shown that an area could take 6-7 years to recover, so there would need to be an enterprise zone for at least 10 years to support the recovery process;
- b) the way in which KCC addresses the issues arising from the closure would need to demonstrate a strong commitment to the needs of the communities of East Kent;
- c) the University of Kent is co-ordinating the various educational establishments who have expressed an interest in using the science and laboratory facilities for teaching and research purposes. There is potential for this to become a major international science teaching site;
- d) the recent Government announcement of Enterprise Zones in relation to LEP bids had not met Kent's hopes. KCC had hoped to be able to set up as many Enterprise Zones as it considered necessary; and
- e) staff and contractors employed at the Pfizer site live across East Kent, with many in Dover and Thanet, so the impact of the closure on the broader area would need to be considered and addressed.

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

69. The Strategic Context for Future Public Sector Investment in Thanet
(Item B3)

1. Ms Cooper introduced the report and explained that it had been written before Pfizer's announcement of the closure of its site. She responded to comments and questions from Members. Points highlighted were as follows:-

- a) the work undertaken by DTZ in Thanet could be also used to benefit Pfizer;
 - b) although HS1 brings people to Thanet, it also provides a way for them to leave the area, so it is important to bear in mind that household income generated within Thanet is not necessarily spent there;
 - c) it is important also not to lose site of the tourism potential in Thanet, and much work on this has been undertaken by Visit Kent and Kent Contemporary; and
 - d) it is possible that Thanet would need to be able to offer higher-quality hotel accommodation (ie of above three-star rating) to attract visitors to the Turner Contemporary.
2. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks.

70. Local Enterprise Partnership/Regional Growth Fund - update *(Item B4)*

Mr R Gill, Economic Policy and Strategy Manager, was in attendance for this and the following item.

The Chairman secured the Committee's agreement to consider this item as urgent business as the papers were not placed on public deposit with the required five days' notice.

1. Mr Gill introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Members. Views expressed were as follows:-
 - a) the LEP bid may not have received universal support but the KCC should now make the most of it and the mechanisms it brings. It is important for the LEP to be closely scrutinised; and
 - b) the KCC would need to fight its corner, and needs to be fully involved in making the challenging decisions which will be required to identify what schemes it wishes to support.
2. The Deputy Cabinet Member, Mr Kite, said he had attended two LEP Interim Board meetings and was confident that the LEP would be allowed to direct its own future development and governance. Kent has a good relationship with government due to its size and reputation and its proximity to London.
3. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and the development of the LEP be closely scrutinised to ensure the successful delivery of the KCC's aims and expectations.

71. Low Carbon Opportunities

(Item B5)

Mr Gill presented a series of slides and updated on progress since the issue had last been reported to the POSC. He responded to comments and questions from Members, and points highlighted were as follows:-

- a) local government does not have the knowledge base or capacity to be a pathfinder in this field, but can be a facilitator through our role as a major purchaser of goods and services and by encouraging suppliers to gain accreditation; and
 - b) businesses will need information as well as financial support to make the best use of opportunities. Work is underway to establish a database of suppliers and examples of good practice.
2. RESOLVED that the information set out in the presentation and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and a watching brief be maintained.

72. Regeneration and Economic Development Business Growth Programme

(Item B6)

1. Ms Cooper and Mr Lynes introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Members. Points highlighted were as follows:-
- a) due to the budget situation and cash constraints, KCC could no longer be a provider of funding but would now take on an enabling role; and
 - b) a view was expressed that, by being inflexible in the past, Kent had missed out on the opportunity to maximise its benefits from the 2012 Olympic Games, and it is too late now to regain this lost ground, although it was pointed out that the Sports Group had attracted economic benefits.
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 POSC receive a further update report in six months' time.

73. KCC's Performance Management Framework

(Item B7)

Mrs S Garton, County Performance and Evaluation Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Garton introduced the report and explained that the new Performance Management Framework would replace the current Core Monitoring reports to each

POSC. She responded to comments and questions from Members. The main points highlighted were as follows:-

- a) the change to a new framework that seeks to be more transparent, establishes a stronger culture of performance management accountability and provides greater self-awareness. The changes would also take account of the changing shape and reducing size of the KCC.
2. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and a report be made to the June meeting which will set out the outcomes of the Member workshops in May.

74. Financial Monitoring Report *(Item B8)*

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

The Chairman secured the Committee's agreement to consider this item as urgent business as the papers could not be placed on public deposit with the required five days' notice.

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

75. Savings Monitoring *(Item B9)*

1. Mr Shipton explained that a verbal statement about the Savings Monitoring process was being made to all POSCs. For any identified savings above a threshold of £200,000, a responsible manager would be identified, who would then prepare a Project Initiation Document (PID). There were currently some 100 of these PIDs, between them accounting for £92 million of the £95 million savings required. The progress of the PID would be monitored using the familiar Red, Amber and Green indicators, and each POSC would receive a report to every meeting on the progress of the PIDs in their portfolio area.

2. Members were reassured that the responsible manager identified in each case would be a Head of Service or Director, so would be fully aware of the responsibility they were taking on and in a sufficiently senior position to direct and ensure delivery of the saving. Delivery could be delegated but the accountability for it could not.

3. RESOLVED that the information set out in the statement and given in response to Members' questions be noted, with thanks, and the first full written report on savings monitoring be made to the POSC's June meeting.

76. Update on Select Committee Work
(Item C1)

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