

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, 24 June 2011.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr K G Lynes, Mr M A Wickham, Professor I Swingland

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms B Cooper (Director of Economic Development), Mr R Gill (Economic Policy and Strategy Manager), Mr R Hallett (Head of Finance and Resources - EHW), Mr M Bodkin (Head of Urban Regeneration), Mrs E Harrison (Rural Regeneration Manager) Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

77. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2011

(Item A4)

Resolved that the Minutes held on 1 April 2011 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

78. Presentation - National/International Rural Regeneration perspectives by Professor Ian Swingland

(Item B1)

1. Professor Swingland gave a presentation that set out the success he had in rural regeneration in Cumbria and Wales through local projects where crops were delivered and sold locally by self funding food co operatives, and responded to comments and questions from Members.

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

- a) farmers that received subsidies were happy to find a local market.
- b) the projects were driven by local people and offered the opportunity to promote healthier diets, cooking, and an opportunity to raise awareness with school children on local produce.
- c) The cooperative was a good example of the "Big Society". Kent already had similar organisation eg Produced in Kent; Action in Kent and Hadlow College.

3. The Cabinet Member, Mr Lynes agreed with the sentiment of the "Big Society" although the idea of a food cooperative was not a new idea the proposals that Prof

Swingland made were on a vast scale. He referred to SILK, which operated on a similar basis on a smaller scale. He considered that the proposals within the presentation could be discussed with Kent Rural PLC and the Food Sector Advisory Group. Prof Swingland advised that he would be happy to take part in any future discussions.

4. Resolved that the information set out in the presentation and given in the responses to Members comments and questions be noted and that the presentation notes be circulated to the POSC.

79. Food Sector Action Plan

(Item B2)

(Mrs E Harrison, Rural Regeneration Manager, was present for this item)

1. Mrs Harrison introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Members. Views expressed were as follows:-

- a) with pressure to reduce the carbon footprint, it was suggested that there could be work undertaken by “Produced in Kent” to promote produce grown locally being marketed locally and then any surplus being transported elsewhere.
- b) It was considered that KCC needed to spend less time planning and more time getting the job done.
- c) concern was raised that Kent’s “Garden of England” branding was being lost.
- d) there needed to be more national promotion of Kent’s produce eg Kent Strawberries at Wimbledon this year.
- e) with the changes in climate; Kent farmers could explore growing exotic fruits/vegetables.

2. RESOLVED that:

- a) the responses to the comments and questions by Members, be noted and;
- b) the progress on how KCC is working with industry partners to shape a food sector action plan for Kent, be noted.

80. Programme of Sector Consultations and Follow Up

(Item B3)

(Mr Lynes, Cabinet Member and Ms B Cooper, Director Economic Development was present for this item)

1. Ms Cooper and Mr Lynes introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Members. Points highlighted were as follows:-

- a) Members were welcome to attend the remaining four consultation events in the programme, the dates and venues to be confirmed.
- b) It was considered key to have networking between district and KCC planning officers.

2. RESOLVED that:

- (a) the responses to comments and question by Members be noted;
- (b) the progress on the sector consultations be noted; and
- (c) a further report detailing the programme of actions developed at the end of the consultation programme be submitted to a future meeting of this POSC.

81. Ambition Board

(Item B4)

(Mr P Carter, Leader of KCC, was present for this item)

1. The Chairman advised that there was a proposal to have an Ambition Board and he wanted Members to have an early opportunity to have an input in shaping the Board's role.

2. The Leader, Mr Carter explained that a discussion had taken place at the Kent Economic Board where it was envisaged that the Ambition Board would have a membership consisting of County Councillors and officers that would review, on an annual basis, what had been delivered by the Kent Economic Board and KCC's role. The views expressed were as follows:

- a) it was considered that each of the groups/boards needed to produce a draft paper of where they were, where they are going, with a "master plan" for the many groups/boards so that they pull in the same direction. There was already a large hierarchy for Kent and Medway and it was about finding a niche for the Ambition Board in that existing hierarchy.
- b) concern was raised that there were already too many boards/ groups and that the hierarchy chain appeared complicated and needed to be streamlined.
- c) there was concern raised regarding each of the Locality Boards developing their own individual characters and what authority they had.

3. Mr Carter assured Members that there was already streamlining and rationalising being undertaken. He felt the question was whether an additional Ambition Board was needed. He envisaged that this Ambition Board would have a

light touch, with monitoring on an annual basis, to ensure that the groups/boards were functioning as they should and if not, making recommendations to be acted on accordingly.

4. RESOLVED that the answers to comments and questions by Members be noted.

82. Regional Growth Fund, Enterprise Zones and Local Enterprise Partnerships

(Item B5)

(Mr R Gill, Economic Strategy and Policy Manager, was present for this item)

1. The Leader, Mr Carter, introduced the report and with Mr Gill and Ms Cooper responded to comments and questions which included the following:-

- a) a view was expressed that Dungeness should receive the same attention as Pfizer with the economic impact it would have in the area and nationally. It was advised that when Pfizer made its closure announcement KCC commissioned an economic impact assessment requesting that it covered the triple shock of the impact of Pfizer, the public sector job losses across East Kent and Dungeness and this information has helped to inform the East Kent Growth Strategy. Shepway District Council had been successful in getting money from the Decommissioning Authority to look at the economic impact of the closure of Dungeness too.
- b) it was considered that there needed to be closer working with the neighbouring counties Sussex and Essex. Mr Carter explained that the neighbouring authorities may not be in the same position as Kent in the detailed strategic thinking about the future but shared the same coastal deprivation issues from Clacton round to Newhaven. To have any impact there had to be collective pressure/influence on national government to stop the dumping of the most vulnerable young people and families out of London to coastal areas.
- c) In response to what the current position was on Fort Halstead, Ms Cooper advised that 800 jobs would be lost over 2-3 years. There was a meeting to be held with Sevenoaks District Council to discuss the response. Sevenoaks District Council was keen to hear of KCC experience from Pfizer and KCC had already sent Sevenoaks the economic impact documents. A view was expressed that the future use of the site was important whether it would be used to provide employment or residential homes.

2. RESOLVED that the information in the report and the responses given to Members' comments and questions be noted and an update report be submitted to a future POSC meeting.

83. 21st Century Kent - Unlocking Kent's Potential

(Item B6)

(Mr P Carter, Leader of KCC and Mr M Bodkin, Head of Growth Areas and Development were present for this item)

1. The Leader, Mr Carter, introduced the report and gave a brief presentation on the vision for Kent and the challenges and opportunities facing Kent to achieve this vision.
2. Mr Carter then responded to comments and questions, which included the following:-
 - a) referring to Land Securities and its proposed development of the Ebbsfleet Valley, a view was expressed that concessions on the Section 106 agreements would be difficult as there were commitments on significant infrastructure needs that were difficult to change. It was explained that KCC had been negotiating with Land Securities over the proposed re profiling of the contribution from the Eastern Quarry s.106 agreement. They had now entered more detailed stage and KCC was looking at how it could work flexibly with Land Securities to enable development to come forward in the short term but still provide the longer term certainty over the commitment on the infrastructure needed for Kent Thameside and wider development in Thames Gateway Kent.
 - b) it was asked whether there was agreement from the Borough Councils on 21st Century Kent and whether there could be strategic planning conformity. In response it was suggested that there needed to be a relationship with the districts, in part to assist KCC in planning the necessary infrastructure. With the ongoing economic uncertainty and fragile property market meaning that it was difficult to know when developers were going to develop, local authorities had to think differently and be more pragmatic.
3. RESOLVED that the information in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions, be noted with thanks.

84. Update on Strategic Projects

(Item B7)

(Ms B Cooper, Director of Economic Development was present for this item)

1. Director of Economic Development, Ms Cooper introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Members. The following views were expressed:-
 - a) referring to the progress of "No Use Empty" it was suggested that more should be done in Kent, rather than spreading the good practise of NUE.

- b) it was advised that on page 33 Dover/Whitfield, Phase 1a received outlined planning approval by Dover District Council on 23 June.
- c) It was suggested that it would be useful for Members to have a summary of what assets and liabilities SEEDA had left. KCC made an offer to SEEDA to join the “Evergreen” model to put in its assets/liabilities. KCC would only pay on conferred considerations. The Treasury said that they would not accept conferred considerations, their preferred option was unless the local authorities wanted to buy them at full market value, no regeneration value, they would transfer those assets to the Homes and Communities (HCA). KCC concluded that it did not want to pay full market value for the regeneration sites. KCC had been advised that the assets/liabilities would transfer on 18 July to the HCA. KCC, the district councils and Medway Unitary have asked to have representation on the HCA Stewardship model to allow them to have a say.

2. RESOLVED that the information in the report and given in responses to Members comments and questions be noted, with thanks.

85. End of Year Budget Outturn Report 2010/2011 (To Follow)

(Item B8)

(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).

(Mr R Hallett, Head of Finance and Resources was present for this item)

1. Mr Hallett introduced the report and responded to comments and questions by Members. Views were expressed as follows:-
- a) The Committee agreed to the Chairman’s suggestion to a one off Member Budget IMG meeting be set up to discuss the budget within the remit of this POSC with an invitation extended to the Cabinet Member, Mr Lynes.
 - b) it was stated that the uncommitted underspend for the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio would go back into the County Council budget.
Note: to clarify this point, technically the underspend will go into the Economic Downturn reserve in accordance with the recommendation agreed by Cabinet but as stated at the POSC meeting, it will not be available for general spend by the R&ED portfolio.
 - c) the format of the future finance reports should reflect the monies generated as well as the money spent, similar to the Sports Development Unit reports.

2. RESOLVED that:

- a) the revenue and capital financial outturn for 2010/11 including rollovers for committed projects and changes to the capital programme, be noted;
- b) the potential impact of variations since the 2011/12 budget was approved, be noted; and
- c) comments and guidance be given at a one off Member Budget IMG meeting to be set up by the Chairman with an invitation to the Cabinet Member, Mr Lynes on potential impact for 2012/13 and future years' budgets, be noted.

86. KCC Performance Management Framework - Delivering Bold Steps
(Item B9)

(Mr D Whittle, Policy Manager was present for this item)

1. The Committee received a report that set out the current development of the performance framework for delivering 'Bold Steps for Kent' which would be submitted to the County Council for approval on 21 July.

2. RESOLVED that the steps being taken to finalise the performance framework be noted.

87. Select Committee Work - Update
(Item C1)

RESOLVED that the information on the current Select Committee reviews set out in the report be noted.