

By: Alex King – Deputy Leader
Peter Sass – Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership

To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 8 October 2008

Subject: OUTSIDE BODIES – KENT COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP STEERING GROUP

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To consider appointments to the Kent Rail Partnership Steering Group (a sub-group of Action with Communities in Rural Kent).

FOR DECISION

INTRODUCTION

1. Kent County Council is represented by Mr Richard King on Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). In addition, Mr Hirst represents the County Council on its Community Halls Sub-Committee.
2. ACRK set up the Kent Community Rail Partnership Steering Group in 2003 in order to bring together the rail industry and local communities to revitalise local secondary railway lines. The Steering Group's terms of Reference are contained in Appendix 1. The Steering Group is part funded by Kent County Council at a cost of £10,000 per year.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE STEERING GROUP

3. The Terms of Reference of the Steering Group explicitly state that its membership will include representation from Kent County Council. Mr J Curwood and Mr A D Crowther have been regularly attending its meetings and have both included their activities for this Group in their Annual Reports to the County Council.
4. It appears that Mr Crowther and Mr Curwood were both approached direct by the Steering Group rather than through Kent County Council. The Community Rail Partnership Project Officer has written to me to explain the grounds for the invitation. He wrote:-

“I write to confirm that Adrian (Crowther) has been a member of our Steering Group for a number of years now and his membership relates to the SwaleRail Line from Sheerness to Sittingbourne that falls within his area. He is a regular attender at our quarterly meetings that normally take place on KCC premises in Maidstone. “

“The Kent CRP is partially funded each year by KCC and also has Cllr Jeff Curwood as a member, with our Medway Valley Line running through his area.”

CONCLUSION

5. It is the County Council’s normal practice to be represented on any outside body to which it contributes financially. It is so represented on the parent body. There is little reason to doubt that Kent County Council would have accepted a formal invitation to be represented. Likewise, it is clear from the Terms of Reference that the Steering Group had, in its own mind, invited representation from the County Council. It simply committed an oversight by inviting representation directly from those Members it considered appropriate rather than by asking the County Council to make the appointments. The financial implications of allowing Mr Curwood and Mr Crowther to be appointed formally as Members of the Steering Group are negligible and relate to travelling and subsistence allowances.

RECOMMENDATION

6. I recommend that the Committee AGREES to appoint two Members to act as the County Council’s representatives on the Kent Community Rail Partnership Steering Group; NOMINATES accordingly; and AGREES retrospectively that Mr Curwood and Mr Crowther have been the County Council’s representatives on the Steering Group up to this time for the purposes of claiming allowances.

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Background Documents
None.