

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Customer and Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 15 September 2011.

PRESENT: Mrs E M Tweed (Chairman), Mr A R Chell (Vice-Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden, Mr H J Craske, Mrs E Green, Ms A Hohler, Mrs J P Law, Mr J M Ozog, Mr R Tolputt, Mrs C J Waters and Mr A T Willicombe

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE and Mr A Sandhu, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Baker (Head of Kent Youth Service), Mr A Birkin (Interim Head of Service), Mr A Bose (Project Manager, Communications and Engagement), Mr G Brown (Partnership Manager, Kent Forum Team), Mr D Crilley (Director of Customer Services), Mrs J Doherty (Policy Manager), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview)), Ms A Honey (Corporate Director, Customer and Communities), Ms J Rawlins (Interim Director of Communication), Ms A Slaven (Director of Service Improvement) and Mr K Tilson (Finance Business Partner - Customer & Communities)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

15. Minutes - 8 July 2011

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2011 are correctly recorded and that they be signed as a correct record.

16. Dates of Meetings 2011 and 2012

(Item A5)

The Committee noted the dates of its meetings for 2012 as follows:-

Friday, 20 January 2012
Wednesday, 21 March 2012
Wednesday, 4 July 2012
Wednesday, 19 September 2012
Wednesday, 14 November 2012

It was noted that all meetings will start at 10.00am and may go on into the afternoon.

17. Portfolio Holder and Corporate Directors update

(Item B1)

(1) Mr Hill and Ms Honey updated Members on the issues listed in the paper circulated with the agenda and answered questions from Members:

Paralympics and Brands Hatch

Mr Hill informed Members that there would be four days of road cycling events at Brands Hatch between 5 and 8 September 2012. There was national and local interest and good progress was being made on the formal arrangements for these events.

Libraries and Archives

Mr Hill reported that in relation to the libraries review there would be a paper to Cabinet Members next month outlining progress, once agreement had been reached a paper would be submitted to this Committee. Mr Hill stated that it was intended to involve local Members and communities in shaping services. It was intended to use Locality Boards as they developed as a forum for discussion on the shape of library services. It was important to develop services with the agreement of local people.

Edenbridge Community Centre

Ms Honey stated that good progress was being made, the two buildings had been demolished. The Centre was due to be completed in summer 2012. Partnership work was continuing, in particular with District Councils to look at the services to be delivered. The Citizens Advice Bureau had signed a lease. She expressed thanks to Mr J White, Capital Transition Manager, for the work he had done on the project.

Archaeological Resource Centre

Mr Hill referred to the previous proposal to site the centre at Kent University which had fallen through. Work was going on with English Heritage, to establish a centre at Dover Castle. This would be a joint project with Customer and Communities, Environment Highways and Waste and English Heritage. English Heritage would be facilitating the majority of the budget for this and there was currently a Lottery bid in respect of this project.

In response to a question, Mr Crilley confirmed that Canterbury City Council was involved with this project and he undertook to inform Members of District Council's involvement with this project.

Open Golf: July 2011

Mr Hill referred to the success of the Open Golf, held at Sandwich in July 2011. It had been a real boost for tourism in the area and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club had expressed an interest in holding the Open Golf in Kent in nine or ten years time. In response to a question, Mr Hill undertook to ensure that information was supplied on which areas would benefit from the golf legacy and whether both private and public clubs would benefit.

Mention was made of the importance of the legacy from events such as the golf and the Olympics.

County Show

Ms Honey stated that despite the inclement weather, there had been over 11,000 visitors to the KCC marquee. The theme was the Contact Centre and work was currently being carried out on a customer services strategy which would come to the Committee in due course.

Opening of Ashford Gateway: July 2011

Mr Sandhu reported that he had attended the soft opening of the Ashford Gateway, which was an asset to Ashford. The Gateway would be officially opened on 7 October 2011. The Chairman referred to the library's co-location at the Gateway and the increase in the number of book loans since the opening of the new facility.

Officers undertook to provide Members with a list of the services available at the Ashford

Opening new Visitor Centre, Trosley County Park: August 2011

Mr Hill stated that he was impressed by the quality of the offer at the new visitors centre.

Opening Gravesend Library: August 2011

Mr Hill mentioned the soft opening of the new Gravesend Library on 23 August 2011, and the innovative link between the new and old buildings. The formal opening would take place on 4 October 2011.

Community Budgets

Ms Honey referred to the Community Budgets which was a new government initiative, providing intense support for a small number of families with specific needs. There were currently two pilots, one in Swale working with families where there was a substance misuse issue, and the other in Thanet working with families where there was an intergenerational workless issue. The next tranche of pilots was being developed, one of which would be in Shepway. Work was taking place with District Councils and partners. A report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on this initiative.

Mr Tolputt asked to receive an update on the pilot Community Budget Scheme for Shepway.

In response to a question on whether the concentration of services on a small number of families would lead to a reduction in services for others, Ms Slaven replied that the service redesign would mean that even if a family was not part of the Community Budget initiative they should still see an improvement in services.

Open Public Services: Consultation

Ms Honey drew to Members attention this government consultation, information on this had been circulated to Members via the Members Information Bulletin. Work was being carried out on a KCC response to the Consultation which would end on 30

September 2011. In line with Bold Steps for Kent, the White Paper was broadly welcomed but there were concerns around bureaucracy and costs associated with implementation.

Turner Contemporary

Mr Hill referred to the latest visitor figures for Turner Contemporary which were way above target. The information from the businesses in the old town was encouraging. A new exhibition would be started shortly.

It was agreed that Members would be sent a breakdown of the visitor figures for Turner Contemporary.

It was noted that there was due to be an annual update on the Margate Task force to the November meeting of the Committee which would include performance targets.

RESOLVED that the update be noted

18. Youth Service Transformation

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Baker gave a presentation which outlined the national context for Youth Service provision and the proposal to transform the Youth Service in Kent. He set out the timetable which was for a decision to be taken by Mr Hill in early December 2011, implementation to commence in January 2012 with the full model in place on 1 September 2012.

(2) Mr Hill stated that he needed to achieve the identified saving but was trying to do this in a way that would provide an even better service. He emphasised that no decision had been taken about the new structure for Youth Services. There would be consultation with Members at a local level and he hoped that it would be possible to reach agreement with Local Member(s) before a decision was taken.

(2) The Chairman referred to a DVD which had been produced by young people in Shepway at a residential event, which was available to Members on request. Consideration would be given to inviting the young people to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

(3) Mr Hill and officers answered questions and noted comments from Members which included the following:-

- In response to a comment on consultation, Ms Honey stated that consultation, communication and engagement were now one function, and that work was being carried out to look at good practise in these areas. She offered to update Members at the next meeting of the Committee on progress with combining these functions.
- In response to a question on the disposal of any centres that were not included within the new service provision, Mr Baker explained that if the model of 12 hubs was adopted it would leave 21 centres surplus. He referred to a flow chart in the documents which showed how these would be disposed of. If a centre was appropriate for use, and had been sold off it

would be possible to look to commission the use of it for certain times during the week.

- Reference was made to the complexity of the process, and whether the voluntary agencies and social enterprises would be ready within the short timeframe.
- There was an opportunity to enhance youth service provision with local areas, and to remove duplication of provision.
- It was confirmed that information on what provision was available with local areas would be provided when discussions were held with Members at the local level.
- Concern was expressed that the trust of young people which had been built up by youth workers over a period of time, would be lost with the reduction in professional youth workers.
- It was confirmed that the needs assessment had taken account of the deprivation issues in certain areas.

RESOLVED that the comments made by Members on the proposals as part of the ninety day consultation process be noted.

19. Kent YOS Improvement Plan resulting from the HMIP CCI report *(Item B3)*

(1) Ms Slaven and Mr Birkin introduced a report which detailed the nature and outcome of the recent Core Case Inspection of the work of the Kent Youth Offending Service and the improvements which were already underway, as contained within the Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan had been submitted to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation and the National Youth Justice Board to monitor its' implementation.

(2) In response to comments from Members, Ms Slaven stated that a lot of work was to be carried out across agencies and KCC on the educational and training needs of young offenders. The traditional system and structures now worked in favour of young people in the justice system. A scheme was being introduced to help them to achieve and, for example, gain entry to apprenticeship schemes, this had been successful with a small number of young offenders. Mr Hill informed the Committee that KCC now had a youth worker working with young offenders at Cookham Wood Youth Offenders Institution to provide continuity for the young people.

(3) Reference was made to the importance of keeping Members informed with balanced reports setting out issues when they occurred rather than waiting until an inspection report required action to be taken. Ms Honey stated that in previous reports the National Indicator information for Kent was strong and therefore the feedback given to Members had been accurate. There was a need to reconcile the national indicator information with more detailed casework and this was the area that was being addressed.

(4) Ms Slaven acknowledged the need to improve practises in the Youth Offending Service, and explained the work that was being carried out to achieve this.

(5) It was suggested that the outcome of the health audit of 200 files currently being carried out should be reported to this Committee.

(6) RESOLVED that the comments made by Members and the Improvement Plan be noted.

20. Kent YOS Annual Operating Plan - 2011/12

(Item B4)

(1) Ms Slaven introduced a paper which sought comments on the Kent YOS Annual Operating Plan to be submitted to the National Youth Justice Board as its Youth Justice Plan for 2011/12.

(2) RESOLVED that the YOS Annual Operating Plan for 2011/12 be noted and submitted to County Council for approval in October 2011.

21. Update on the New Structure for Engagement Managers

(Item B5)

(1) Ms Rawlins set out the background to the introduction of the structure for Engagement Managers within the Communication, Consultation and Community Engagement division. She explained that the process had involved pulling together just under 100 people into a new structure and saving £1.5m. This included a mixture of different kinds of work. As part of this process she had listened to a lot of people and looked at improving practise and effectiveness. It was important to have strong project management in order to be able to audit and ensure that work carried out was of sufficient quality and gave value for money. The structure had been put in place first and then consideration had been given to relevant numbers. When approval had been given by Cabinet she had emailed all Members to inform them. All jobs descriptions had been re-written and assessed by Personnel. People had been invited to apply for as many jobs at any level. There had been 195 expressions of interest and 107 different interviews had been held, it had been a tough but fair process.

(2) In relation to the Engagement Officers, one concern that had been expressed by Members was the lack of sharing of intelligence from meetings, she had therefore put in two additional analysis and information roles to support the Engagement Officers role. She emphasised the importance of having robustness when carrying out consultations though the Engagement Officers role. She reminded Members that it was KCC's practise to have a root and branch review 9 months after a re-structuring and this have been timetabled. She stated that she believed that the 12 Community Engagement roles and their additional support would provide a better service.

(3) RESOLVED that the update be noted.

22. Vision for Kent 2011-2021 consultation draft

(Item B6)

(1) Mr King and Mr Brown presented the "Vision for Kent". This document was Kent Forum's partnership strategy, developed between the public, private and voluntary sectors in Kent. A draft version of the refreshed strategy, Vision for Kent 2011-2021, had been out for consultation between June and August 2011. Customer and Communities POSC was asked to consider the draft document, the summary of responses received during the consultation and to note the next steps in getting the Vision for Kent 2011-2021 finalised.

(2) A Member stated that Canterbury City Council had incorporated the 3 ambitions for Kent, from Bold Steps for Kent, into their Corporate Plan and were currently out to consultation, this was part of a cohesive approach for Kent.

(3) It was suggested that Locality Boards need some key issues to get involved in at an early stage in their development, one such issue could be the youth service transformation.

(4) In relation to ambition 3 it was asked whether there would be enough new volunteers.

(5) Mixed views were expressed on whether the number of responses had been adequate. Mr Brown stated that he believed that this had been a good response for this type of consultation and mention was made of the effective use made of the County Show to engage with the public.

RESOLVED that the comments and the next steps in getting the Vision for Kent 2011-2021 finalised be noted.

23. Kent Partners' Compact - Refresh

(Item B7)

(1) Ms Doherty introduced a report on the Kent Partners' Compact which had been launched in 2009. Work has been undertaken recently to update the Compact in line with national guidelines published in December 2010. The updated Compact had now been published as a consultation draft. The consultation period ran from July 7th 2011 to September 30th 2011. KCC Members were alerted to the consultation via the Information Bulletin published on 15th July 2011. A consultation draft and response form was attached to the report for any member who wished to submit comments.

(2) Ms Doherty answered questions and noted comments from Members which included the following:-

- It was mentioned that the Compact was adhered to at a local level. It was suggested that Members should make sure that their District Councils were looking at the Compact and the opportunities that it presented to achieve savings.
- In response to question on whether she was aware of concerns from the voluntary sector about the amount of work that they could have the opportunity

to pick up, Ms Doherty stated that the response was mixed, some organisations welcomed the opportunity whilst others said that it felt difficult for them.

RESOLVED that the comments on the Kent Partners' Compact and the opportunity to contribute to the consultation be noted.

24. Financial Monitoring

(Item B8)

(1) Mr Tilson introduced a report which contained the full monitoring report for the first quarter of 2011/12 in relation to the Customer and Communities portfolio.

(2) In response to a question on the vacancy management within the wardens service, Mr Tilson explained that the mobile wardens would cover any vacancies but all posts were filled at the moment.

(3) Regarding the Big Society Fund, Ms Honey stated that work was being carried out with Cabinet and it was expected that the fund would be launched this year. Part of the criteria for accessing the fund would be match funding.

(4) Mr Tilson confirmed that in relation to the number of press releases, this was part of a current review. Also regarding the increase in the number of calls to the contact centre and the impact that this had on the budget, one of the options that would be considered was whether to relax the targets for answering calls with a certain time.

RESOLVED that the projected outturn figures for the directorate for 2011/12 based on the latest monitoring report to the Cabinet be noted.

25. Customer & Communities Annual Complaints, Comments and Compliments Report 2010/11

(Item B9)

(1) Mr Bose presented a report which provided information about complaints against the Council considered by the Local Government Ombudsman; comments on the Council's performance on complaints, comments and compliments (including a detailed report on the Customer and Communities, complaints, comments and compliments); and reports on developments in the Council's complaint handling for 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011.

(2) In response to a question on the need to ensure that responses to the Ombudsman are carried out within the required time, Ms Honey explained that there would be an improvement in this as a centralised team would now be dealing with complaints on behalf of the whole authority.

RESOLVED that the report be noted

26. Consultations

(Item B10)

(1) Mr Bose introduced a report to update the Committee on the activities that took place between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011 to consult, engage and involve all those who are interested in or involved with services provided by the previous Communities Directorate..

(2) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

27. Select Committee - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the current Select Committee topic review. The Chairman of the Select Committee introduced an update on the areas of possible recommendation from the Select Committee on the Student Journey, and Members comments were invited.

(2) It was noted that the proposal from this Committee to establish a Select Committee on Domestic Abuse would be considered by the Scrutiny Board on 2 November 2011.

(3) RESOLVED that the draft areas of recommendation proposed by the Select Committee on the Student Journey and the proposal to seek approval for a Select Committee on Domestic Abuse be noted.

28. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 18 November 2011 instead of the diarised date of 11 November 2011.