

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 9 January 2012.

PRESENT: Mr A J King, MBE (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Mr G K Gibbens, Mr R W Gough, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr J D Simmonds, Mr B J Sweetland, Mr M J Whiting and Mrs J Whittle

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Austerberry (Corporate Director, Environment and Enterprise), Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of Human Resources), Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director of Business and Support), Ms A Honey (Corporate Director, Customer and Communities), Mr A Ireland (Corporate Director, Families and Social Care), Mr P Leeson (Corporate Director Education, Learning and Skills Directorate), Ms M Peachey (Kent Director Of Public Health), Mr G Wild (Director of Governance and Law), Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement) and Mr G Mills (Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2011 *(Item 3)*

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2011 be agreed, and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

2. Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Exception Report *(Item 4 – Report by Mr J Simmonds, Cabinet member for Finance & business Support; Mr A Wood, Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement and corporate Directors)*

(1) Mr Simmonds outlined the key elements of this report and highlighted the main pressures. There is a current under spend of just over £1m which Mr Simmonds said in the context of a budget reduction of £95m allayed some earlier doubts this could be achieved. Mrs Whittle referred to the increase in the number of social workers dealing with vulnerable children and said the costs of employing agency staff was decreasing as the County Council took on more permanent staff. Mr Whiting referred to pages 20 and 21 of the report and highlighted the investments the County Council was making in Kent's schools.

(2) Mr Simmonds also reported on adjustments made to the capital Budget since the last meeting.

(3) Following further discussion Cabinet resolved to:

- (a) note the forecast revenue and capital budget monitoring position for 2011 – 2012;

- (b) agree the virement of £0.199m from the under spending with the Finance and Business support portfolio to the Environment, Highways and Waste portfolio;
- (c) not the changes to the Capital programme;
- (d) agree that £3.891m of re-phasing in the capital programme is moved from 2011-12 capital cash limits to future years; and
- (e) agree the inclusion of the Integrated Children's System project in the Business Strategy, Performance and Health reform portfolio to be funded by £1.326m prudential borrowing (£0.652m in 2011-12 and £0.674m in 2012-13)

3. Provisional Grant Settlement 2012/13

(Item 5 – report by Paul Carter, Leader of the Council, John Simmonds, Cabinet member for Finance and Business Support, Mr A Wood, Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement) (Mr D Shipton was present for this item)

(1). The provisional finance settlement from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was announced on 8 December 2011. Mr Shipton said the provisional settlements were largely as had been anticipated based on the indicative allocations announced on 31 January 2011 and set out in table 3 of the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (page 20) and covered in paragraphs 2.23 to 2.32.

(2). The main headline for schools is that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) would remain at the same cash per pupil as 2011/12 (which itself was the same as 2010/11) and that once again no authority can lose more than 2% in cash terms. There are still some specific grants which have not been announced but the Council's policy will remain the same in that it will adjust spending supported by specific grants in line with grant changes.

(3) Mr Shipton said no indicative allocations for 2013/14 or 2014/15 have been published pending the outcome of consultation on changes to both the local government and schools funding systems. The Government published the draft Local Government Finance Bill on 20 December 2011 which Mr Shipton explained would provide the legal framework for the Business Rates retention proposals.

(4) The deadline for responses to the provisional local government settlement was 16 January 2012 and Cabinet noted that the proposed response would include welcoming the fact that the Government had not made any changes to the formula Grant methodology and that it now incorporated the 2011/12 Council Tax Freeze Grant. Concerns previously expressed with the "four block" model would be re-stated and that this would in effect be crystallised with the proposed changes from 2013/14 through the Business Rates retention proposals.

(5) Following further discussion Cabinet resolved to note the provisional allocations and delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Business Support to agree the Council's response to the Provisional Local Government Settlement.

4. Customer Service and ICT Strategies

(Item 6 - report by Mr M Hill, Cabinet Member for Customer & Communities, Mr R Gough, Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance and Health Reform, Mr D Cockburn, Corporate Director – Business Strategy and Support and Ms A Honey, Corporate Director – Customer and Communities) (Mr D Crilley and Mr P Bole were present for this item)

(1) Mr Hill said the Customer Service Strategy emphasised the Council's commitment to put its customers at the heart of what it does in providing effective and efficient services. The Cabinet report provided a clear analysis of what was needed in order to achieve these aims and he commended its recommendations. Mr Gough said these two strategies complimented one another and together they would lead to improving people's experience in the way they access Council services.

(2) Mr Crilley and Mr Bole both spoke of the opportunities these two complimentary strategies presented in helping to bring about a unified approach to customer services.

(3) Following further discussion Cabinet resolved to:

(a) endorse the Customer Service Strategy and agree to its publication;
and

(b) agreed that the Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance and Health Reform be authorised to take the final decision in respect of the ICT Strategy having taken into account the views of the Cabinet and those of the Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was meeting on 11 January 2012.

5. Children's Services Improvement Plan - Minutes of 20 September 2011

(Item 7)

(1) Mrs Whittle said there was continuing good progress across the Improvement Plan. In particular the focus on improving the quality of social work practice and recruitment was showing positive results and there was now going to be a concerted focus on increasing the number of adoptions.

(2) Cabinet resolved to note the Minutes of the Children's Service Improvement Plan on 20 September 2011.

6. Recommendations from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee - 13 December 2011 and Recommendation following the Specialist Children's Services POSC - 17 November 2011

(Item 8)

(1) Mrs Whittle said there has been a reduction in the number of children in care and as reported elsewhere a decrease in reliance on agency social workers as a result as an increase in the number of permanent of staff. Mrs Whittle said she had

found this meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to be constructive and helpful and the information which had been requested would be circulated shortly.

(2) Resolved that the comments and actions detailed in the report be noted.