

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 8 February 2007.

PRESENT: Mr P B Carter (Chairman), Mr N J D Chard, Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr G K Gibbens, Mr R W Gough, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr K G Lynes, Mr J D Simmonds and Dr T R Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Gilroy (Chief Executive), Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mr O Mills (Managing Director - Adult Social Services), Ms L McMullan (Director of Finance) and Mr P Raine, Managing Director for Regeneration and Environment, Dr I Craig attended on behalf of the Managing Director for Children, Families and Education.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

Recent Bad Weather – Update by Mr Pete Raine, Managing Director for Regeneration and Environment

Mr Raine reported on the response been made by the County Council to the recent bad weather and particularly the snowfall which had taken place on 7 and 8 February 2007. Mr Raine placed on record his thanks to all members of staff who had been involved in the snow clearing operations and thanked them for the success of their efforts. This was wholly endorsed by Cabinet.

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 January 2007 *(Item. 1)*

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2007 were agreed as a true record.

2. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Exception Report *(Item. 2 Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Finance, and Lynda McMullan, Director of Finance and Managing Directors)*

(1) This Exception Report, based upon returns from Directorates, highlighted the main movements since the report to Cabinet in January.

(2) Mr Chard said that since the report to Cabinet at its last meeting there had been further reductions in the overspend and what remained was now almost wholly related to asylum costs. There was a continuing underspend on the Capital Budget and Mr Chard said he would be working with Directorates to look at ways in which the pace of spending on the Capital Programme could be increased. Ms McMullan reassured Cabinet that any pressures shown in the current budget had been built into the Medium Term Plan for 2007-10.

(3) Mr Carter referred to a meeting which he had had with other local authorities

affected by shortfalls in payments on Asylum costs. These authorities had agreed to work collectively and were in the process of preparing a joint response to be submitted to the Treasury, the Home Office and the DfES. This would put forward a robust case regarding the underpayment of asylum costs and asking Government to move quickly to resolve the current unfairness in the system. Mr Carter also said he would be working with Mr Chard to look at ways to accelerate the Capital Programme.

(4) Cabinet noted the latest forecast revenue and budget monitoring position for 2006/07.

3. Medium Term Plan 2007-10 (Incorporating the Budget and Council Tax Setting for 2007-08) - Update (Cabinet report to follow)

(Item. 3 - Report by Mr Paul Carter, Leader of the Council, Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Finance, Mr Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive and Ms Lynda McMullan, Director of Finance)

(Appendix B to the report was circulated at the meeting. This provided a summary of the comments made on the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget made at recent meetings of the Policy Overview Committees at the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7 February 2007)

(Prior to the commencement of discussion on this item, the Chairman declared consideration of the Budget report to be urgent on the grounds that it was not available at the time the Agenda was despatched. This was because the report needed to include the most up to date information and analysis on the final Local Government settlement figures, the final tax bases agreed by the Kent District Councils and the surplus of deficits announced on the District Councils' collection funds)

(1) This report provided an update on the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2007-2010 considered at the Cabinet meeting held on 15 January 2007. The report also summarised the comments made on the Draft at recent meetings of the Policy Overview Committees and the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee. Cabinet also received an oral report on the meeting of the Business Consultation Forum held on 6 February 2007 and the Budget consultation meeting with Trade Union and professional body association representatives held on 7 February 2007.

(2) In presenting this report and highlighting key areas, Mr Chard placed on record his thanks to the Chairman of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee who had agreed to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing concern over any delay there may be on announcing the outcomes of the Comprehensive Spending Review. CSR07 was expected to be published in June/July but it was understood there was now the possibility that its publication could be delayed until September. Such a delay could have serious consequences for KCC and Mr Chard said that he had already written to Stephen Timms on the matter.

(3) Mr Carter said that when money ring-fenced for the Delegated School Grant was taken out of the equation the result for Kent was that it had -5.3% less money from Government to spend on Council services. As a result, KCC had had to raise Council Tax above inflation. The Report detailed the very good reason as to why that was and he thanked the media for the part it had played in helping to explain to Kent residents the difficult situation that the County Council faced. Mr Carter also

said and it was agreed that for the purposes of the County Council meeting a paper should be prepared showing the County Council's budget situation once the Delegated Schools Grant had been disaggregated.

(4) Cabinet then agreed the recommendations detailed in paragraphs 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 of the report.

4. Free Travel for 11-16 Year Olds

(Item. 4- Report by Mr Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste and Mr Pete Raine, Manager Director, Environment and Regeneration)

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL
RECORD OF CABINET DECISION**



**DECISION
TAKEN ON**

Cabinet
8 February 2007

DECISION NO.
06/00943

Free Travel for 11-16 Year Olds

(Item 4 – Report by Mr Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste and Mr Pete Raine, Manager Director, Environment and Regeneration)
(Mr David Hall, the County Transportation Manager was present for this item)

(1) Mr Hall said that negotiations were nearly completed with bus service providers across Kent for the establishment of free travel trials in areas covered by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Canterbury City Council and Tonbridge Town. Appendix 1 to the report detailed what the pilot scheme would include, Appendix 2 detailed the participating secondary schools and Appendix 3 detailed the costs of introducing a county-wide free scheme. Mr Hall said that during discussions with bus operators, concern had been expressed that a start date in September 2007 would prove difficult due to the very busy nature of that month. It was therefore proposed to commence the pilot schemes after the summer half term as that was the quietest time for school travel and would provide a good test of the use of off peak travel for cultural activities during the summer holidays. Mr Hall said that the operators would be providing additional buses on the routes covered by the pilot scheme to cope with expected increases in demand. However, the scheme would not affect any private arrangements parents may have for getting their children to and from school.

(2) Mr Ferrin said that the negotiations around the provision of this scheme had proved to be complex and challenging. The key aspirations were to bring about a reduction in peak hour congestion; improve social inclusion, through improved mobility for young people outside school hours and encourage long term use of public transport by young people. Mr Ferrin emphasised the pilot scheme would run for two years and there could be no guarantee that after that time it would continue. Therefore parents needed to be aware of that fact and to take decisions around school transport provision for their children accordingly. He also emphasised that the introduction of the pilot scheme did not affect any existing arrangements that there may be for children to have free transport. Mr Ferrin said the feasibility of introducing free travel would be fully tested through the introduction of the pilot schemes and further decisions would be taken in two years time in the light of the information arising out of the pilot schemes.

(3) Mr Carter concluded discussion on this item by firstly thanking the Select Committee on Home to School Transport for the work it had done on this matter. He also welcomed the co-operation between the County Council and the bus operators and said the scheme would not only meet key policy aspirations of the County Council but would also see a significant increase in investment from the Bus Operators.

4. Free Travel for 11-16 Year Olds Cont'd

(4) Cabinet then agreed:-

- (i) to the introduction of pilot free travel schemes for 11-16 year olds as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report for a minimum of two years;

(ii) that the Director of Environment and Regeneration be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste to approve detailed elements of the scheme and to enter into any necessary agreements or contracts as appropriate with the transport operators.

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Signed Peter Gilroy (Chief Executive)

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Decision Referred to Cabinet Scrutiny			
YES		NO	✓

Cabinet Scrutiny Decision to Refer Back for Reconsideration			
YES		NO	

Reconsideration Record Sheet Issued			
YES		NO	

Reconsideration of Decision Published	

5. Lorry Parking Issues

(Item. 5 - Report by Mr Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence, Mr Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste and Mr Pete Raine, Managing Director for Environment and Regeneration)

(1) This report set out a proposed response to the Consultation document published by the Highways Agency on "Policy for Service Areas and Other Roadside Facilities". The report recommended the County Council should respond to the consultation, particularly in relation to lorry parking and Operation Stack.

(2) In presenting the report Mr Ferrin said that he believed that it would be easier to get planning permission to establish a parking area for vehicles affected by Operation Stack than to provide a lorry park which would be in constant use. He therefore believed it would be wise to keep these two issues separate. The County Council was already working with Dover District Council to identify an "Operation Stack" site in that area.

(3) Other Members who spoke said they fully supported the views set out in the Report and said it was essential Government fully recognised that this was a national and international problem and therefore it should provide the necessary resources to provide adequate lorry parking in Kent accordingly. Mr Chard spoke about the possible introduction of a 'Brit Disk' through which foreign registered vehicles would pay a levy at their point of entry into the UK, and the Channel Ports in particular. The revenue raised could then be used to pay for improving the Highway facilities and road network through Kent. It was agreed that this proposal would be included in the response to Government. Mr Lynes said that past promises made by the Government to both Kent and Essex County Councils about them receiving a share of the income generated by the Dartford River Crossing had been broken. Therefore KCC needed to be robust in future negotiations with the Government to ensure Kent received a fair and ongoing proportion of the income generated by such a scheme. This was agreed.

(4) In conclusion, Mr Carter said that he supported the introduction of a fee for foreign vehicles entering through the Channel Ports as a way of raising revenue which took account of the wear and tear on Kent's roads. He also said that the

County Council must continue to work closely with its partners to ensure the Government takes a proactive role in providing solutions caused by the ever increasing lorry traffic passing through Kent.

(5) Cabinet then agreed that a response be made to the Highways Agency based on Sections 3 and 4 of the Cabinet report and also incorporating the key points made during the course of discussion.

6. Cabinet Scrutiny and Policy Overview
(Item. 6 - Report by Mr Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive)

This report summarised the outcomes from the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held on 13 December 2006 and also detailed the overall work programme for Select Committee Topic Reviews as agreed by the Policy Overview Committee.