

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr L Christie to the  
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services**

Would the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services report the outcome of the consultation exercise on Supporting People which was due to conclude on 1 June 2007?

In particular, can he report the number of representations made on the issue of Scheme Managers (Wardens) for Sheltered Accommodation and how many supported and how many opposed the concept of Scheme Managers becoming peripatetic rather than continuing to live in and serve the Sheltered Accommodation complex?

**ANSWER**

There are 250,000 older people in Kent and only just over 19,000 are getting a service. The 231,000 older people currently unable to access Supporting People services were unable to give their views in this consultation.

Out of over 19,000 service users, 440 phone calls, e-mails and letters were received. Of these, 377 opposed the proposals and 3 supported them. The remaining contacts from service users were:

- 18 who did not wish to lose the floating support arrangements, and
- 42 who requested further information.

In addition, to this response from residents 12 letters from Members and MPs and 4 petitions (with 453 signatures) against the proposals were received. Finally, 15 responses from provider organisations were received of which 7 were against the changes.

It is natural that some providers wish to retain the status quo because it secures a regular revenue-funding stream, and ensures their business continuity, sometimes to the detriment of service users who do not have any choice about how and who delivers services.

There has been a considerable amount of misunderstanding and misinformation in the media surrounding the principles upon which the consultation was founded. This misinformation included allegations that:

- services would be taken away from people who needed them
- service users would have to “queue” for services
- services would be withdrawn after two years
- service levels would be reduced, and

- changes would be introduced in April 2008 without giving providers the opportunity to consult with service users, and rather than giving providers the opportunity to change their services over time with consultation.

None of this is true, and all of it has upset vulnerable older people unnecessarily.

The consultation was based on the principle that services should be given to those who need them no matter where they live, making the best use of the limited funding that is available by targeting it more effectively.

A more flexible service should enable everyone to choose who provides their service. Service users should have real choice not just accept what they are given. All service users should have the same choices whether they are in sheltered housing or not.

Service users should not have to pay for, or require the Programme to pay for, services that they do not want, or which are sometimes lacking in quality and consistency. Service users can sign a waiver that they do not want a warden or alarm, but the self-payer or Supporting People still pays for the service. They may be fifty and in employment, but they have to pay for a scheme manager / warden. This is because they may have been placed in a scheme because of their housing need and not their support need.

A scheme manager may be off on long-term sick, and that scheme's residents may be receiving a substandard backup service as a result but they or the Programme still have to pay for that service in full. Is this a good use of personal and public funds? Is this not conniving in the provision of poor support, by sustaining that model of care?

Older people are being given a false sense of security. The European working time directive ensures that scheme managers / wardens only work a standard number of hours per week. The Supporting People Team cannot plan a service that assumes they will be called upon at night, or weekends. However the perception is that wardens will provide a service to an older person no matter what it is or what time of the day or week it is. Good wardens operate beyond those limitations – but what happens when they are ill, or on holiday? And what happens with other wardens who merely work to contracted hours?

The Supporting People Team has real evidence that floating support is working for older people. There are already over 4000 households in Kent with older people being supported in this way. The Team has visited older people who are in receipt of this service and are being enabled to live independent lives within the community.

The principles upon which the consultation was based are still valid. However the responses will be carefully considered and will inform the approach to the delivery of Supporting People services to older people, and consequently the recommendations presented to the Commissioning Body's meeting in September.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mrs C Angell to the  
Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance**

Can the Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance inform the Council why he stated in a reply to Question 12 at the Council meeting of 17 May that the estimated total investment in the ill-fated Virginia flights project was £1.081m while at the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee meeting on 21 March he told members that “the total cost incurred by all the partners” was £0.825m? Can he provide a revised breakdown for the contributions from partners?

**Answer**

The figure of a total project cost of £825,310 that was quoted at Cabinet Scrutiny Committee by the Leader and the Managing Director for Environment and Regeneration, was given in the context of a line of questioning that focused on the benefits to Kent and on the UK partner contributions. As such it did not include the £256,000 spend in the USA by Norfolk Airport Authority. When the £825,310 figure and the £256,000 figure are put together, the total project cost comes to the estimated £1,081,000.

This is all detailed on the KCC website and has been available for all to see since March 2007.

As my previous County Council question response stated, the fact therefore remains that from an estimated total investment by all the project partners, on both sides of the Atlantic of £1,081,000, the cost to this Council is £298,560. The County Council exposure was therefore approximately 27% of the total cost.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mrs E Green to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Since 2005 I have been raising with Highways the dangerous state of Network Rail railings in Ramsgate. They are adjacent to footpaths and last year a resident was injured. Would the Cabinet Member for Highways tell me what action will be taken by his Department and when?

**Answer**

The problem of the Network Rail fencing in Ramsgate was brought to our attention in 2003 by a member of the public, who was also advised to make contact with the Network Rail Helpline. Despite numerous attempts to get some action nothing has ever happened. Mrs Green became involved in 2005 and further contact was made with Network Rail who said they would investigate and contact us. Again no further contact was ever made by them. There have subsequently been incidents at Manston Road and Newington Road where incidents have left damaged railings for far too long.

The two sets of railings in question are both sited on Network Rail land. A letter was written to the Managing Director of Network Rail on 29 December 2006 and we have still to receive a reply.

As a result of Mrs Green's question to the County Council further emails have been sent to two representatives of Network Rail and to date no response has been received. I will ask the Director of Kent Highway Services to raise this matter at a more senior level in the organisation to ensure that it is resolved. This will be communicated to Mrs Green.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr M Vye to the  
Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement**

Would the Cabinet Member for Education inform the Council the percentage of pupils in Kent grammar schools who are recognised as having an educational difficulty or disability, disaggregated into category of need; and also the total percentage of their pupils who are entitled to Free School Meals?

**Answer**

There are 80 children in attendance at Kent Grammar Schools with a Statement of Special Educational Need with an additional 19 with needs at School Action Plus. The total percentage is 0.31%. Numbers of children with different needs are as follows:-

Autistic Spectrum Disorder	23
Behaviour, Emotional and Social	4
Hearing Impaired	9
Moderate Learning Difficulties	2
Physical Disability	17
Severe Learning Complex Needs	6
Specific Learning Difficulties	2
Visually Impaired	<u>17</u>
	<u>80</u>

2 % of pupils in attendance at Kent Grammar Schools are entitled to free school meals. However, I am sure Mr Vye is aware that this is not always an accurate measure since parents in receipt of Working Tax Credit do not qualify for free school meals.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr G Rowe to the  
Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement**

In the light of David Willetts', the Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for Education & Skills, support of the Labour Party's policy to actively encourage City Academies rather than continue to support Grammar Schools, would the Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement clarify what Kent's Conservative administration plan to do about Kent Grammar Schools and does he not agree with me that one of the reasons for Kent Conservative success at County elections is due to the retention of this elitist system.

**Answer**

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify with you our intention to maintain and strengthen the richness, diversity and excellence in our provision of secondary education in the County. In Kent we have a successful mix of secondary schools including Grammar schools, High schools, All - ability schools and Academies enhanced by federations and other mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between schools, all set in the context of our cluster organisation. We shall continue to personalise the education offer so that every young person is stimulated, nurtured and stretched to the full extent of his or her abilities, interests and needs. To achieve this we need the full diversity of provision we have available in Kent.

Of course, Grammar schools have a continuing and substantial part to play. The academic achievements of our students are well documented. What is more, in East Kent in particular, a large number of young people go on to university from families whose parents have not attended university. Kent Grammar schools provide a firm foundation to equip our young people for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and many parents very much value the education they provide. They will continue to have our support and encouragement within the collaborative arrangements we have put in place across the County.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr J F London to the  
Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services**

Would the Cabinet Member for Children and Families please say how many child carers there are in Kent and what provision is made to help them both as carers and with their education?

**Answer**

The 2001 Census identified the 3324 young carers in Kent and Medway<sup>1</sup> research would indicate that this figure is nearer 6178. The absolute number of young carers in the county is unknown as the role can be hidden by families, because of a fear of statutory intervention, and by the young carers themselves, who do not wish their role to be recognised by their peers.

Currently, in Kent we have 6 Young Carers projects within the voluntary sector that, at current capacity, are able to support some 400 (as of 2005) young people. The support these projects provide varies from offering time and space to have fun with other young carers away from their caring responsibilities through to individual one to one support.

Some young carers projects work directly with local schools to raise awareness about the needs of young carers and support them in school. Individual schools may offer young carers a range of supports dependant on their particular needs. This support may include mentoring, support with homework, time to share experiences and worries, helping young carers develop strategies for dealing with stress or specific time after school to have fun. Family Liaison Officers may help some young carers and their families access other services.

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Dearden and Saul Becker University of Loughborough 2004

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**17 May 2007**

**Question by Mr R E King to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste outline the steps he will be taking to improve the problems with serious crashes that regularly occur at Kempe's Corner on the A28 between Ashford and Canterbury.

Would the Cabinet Member also please confirm that he will do everything in his power to see that a roundabout is built so that local residents, my constituents, will be relieved of the trauma of detailing with ongoing serious "crashes" that occur directly outside their properties.

**Answer**

I can confirm that the countywide integrated transport programme for 2007/08 was approved by the Highways Advisory Board on 6<sup>th</sup> March including the scheme for Kempe's Corner, and the full Ashford programme was reported to the Ashford Joint Transportation Board on the evening of 13<sup>th</sup> March.

Work is already underway in working up the design for the 'Small Crash Remedial Measures' in more detail, including the consideration of an experimental 40 mph speed limit, and will be presented to the local community for comment prior to any works taking place.

Alongside this, preparatory work for a roundabout will also be progressed as fundamental issues such as land requirements and impact upon underground services will need to be understood as soon as possible as these could have a major impact upon cost and whether or not the scheme is actually feasible.

I have asked that the appropriate officers keep you apprised of progress



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr M Fittock to the  
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence**

Will the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence inform the Council what safeguards are being proposed to protect Kent's unique environment and wildlife from the introduction of Genetically Modified crops into the county? My constituents are concerned that the Towards 2010 targets related to the development, production and use of bio-fuels will allow the introduction of GM crops. Will the Cabinet Member give the Council any greater assurance that GM crops will not be permitted in the county under the guise of research or eco-friendly fuels than was given to the Council on 14 September and 2 November 2006?

**Answer**

We acknowledge the considerable economic and environmental benefits associated with the use of non-food crops to produce bio-fuel, and at the same time recognise the limitations of our ability to monitor and identify the use of GM crops in the county.

Oilseed rape has been grown extensively in Kent for many years, and the use of this crop to produce bio-fuel provides an emerging medium-term market, from which Kent farmers will benefit. At the same time, the increasing use of bio-fuels will help reduce the climatic and environmental consequences of using unsustainable mineral and fossil materials.

As previously stated in my responses to questions on 14 September and 2 November 2006, our focus in setting up an International Centre for Non-Food Crops is primarily to map land-use across the world, both of existing production of non-food crops and the potential for future production. To a large extent, the question of what crops will be grown in Kent, and the role of the Centre, are two different questions.

Ultimately the work of the Centre could help producers in both developed and developing countries to benefit from sustainable economic and environmental opportunities.

KCC, along with other local authorities, is unable to provide a framework of rules to control the use of GM crops. However, we are able to lobby Central Government to ensure a measured and appropriate stance is taken at a national level.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr D Smyth to the  
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services**

Could the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services tell the Council when invitations to attend consultation meetings about the proposed increases to home care charges were sent out; how many letters were sent and to how many organisations and individuals; the dates of the two consultation meetings, the capacity of the venues and the parking arrangements at both; and what arrangements were made to assist potential attendees in accessing care support?

**ANSWER**

An invitation to attend a public consultation meeting was included in the letter that provided information about proposed changes to the Domiciliary Care Charging Policy which was sent to all people receiving domiciliary services, including those taking a direct payment. We also included a questionnaire, with a reply envelope, and asked people to let us know what they thought about the proposed changes. In addition, we gave a free phone telephone number and there was a team of people available to answer any telephone queries. This meant that people had a choice of either coming along to a meeting, speaking to someone by telephone or telling us what they thought in writing. They could also make their views known by filling in the questionnaire online with support to do this if they wished.

This information was sent out to service users, and/or their representative/carer on 9 May 2007. Information to people receiving a Direct Payment was sent out during the week beginning 14 May 2007.

In total over 8,000 letters and questionnaires were sent out to individuals. In addition, the same information went to about 100 organisations representing service user and carer groups. A separate letter was sent from myself on 9 June 2007 to all Kent County Council Members and Kent MP's. The consultation period will end on 31 July.

The two consultation meetings were in Whitstable on 22 May 2007 and Tonbridge on 23 May at 7 pm. 23 members of the public came along to each meeting. There were five members of KCC staff in attendance to make presentations and to assist in the smooth running of the events.

As well as myself, KCC Members Mark Dance and Mike Harrison came to the meeting in Whitstable, and Godfrey Horne to the meeting in Tonbridge. The choice of location and timing was based on views previously received from Members. However, in response to subsequent feedback from service users and carers who could not attend an evening meeting, a further public meeting will be held at the Julie Rose Stadium, Ashford on 28 June at 10.30 am.

We sent out further letters to all service users, including Direct Payment service users on 11 June 2007 to tell them about this. In that letter we encouraged people who have not responded so far to let us know what they think.

The capacity of the Whitstable venue was 50 and in Tonbridge it was 60. There was ample parking at both venues and we asked anyone who had any specific needs to contact us.

In total, nine people requested either transport or fares which were provided. Sound systems were in place to support people with hearing impairment and the presentations were designed to support people with a visual impairment.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr M J Northey to the  
Cabinet Member for Finance**

Would the Cabinet Member for Finance please tell me if the rate of inflation actually experienced by KCC varies from the Retail Price Index and what difference it would make to KCC's financial position if the Government took this fully into account when settling Formula Grant?

**ANSWER**

Inflation included within our 2007-08 Budget (including schools) was 3.8%. However this increase only provided for the 2% staff pay award, the increase in the employer's pension contribution, and certain service specific unavoidable price increases, which are listed in the Budget Book.

But this is not the full story as other price pressures are unbudgeted and must be met from existing budget provision. Therefore in total the actual impact of inflation on KCC's services in 2007-08 exceeds 5%.

The current annual rate of Retail Prices inflation is 4.3% (May 2007 index), having peaked in March at 4.8%.

There is currently no formal national indicator of local government inflation.

However a Public Sector Inflation index can be derived from quarterly data published by the Office for National Statistics. The annual Public Sector Inflation rate at the fourth quarter of 2006 is 4.3%. This figure is subject to further data revisions.

KCC received a floor increase of Formula Grant of 2.7%, an increase of £6.0m on the adjusted grant for 2006-07. As previously reported this is the nominal 2.7% headline change. After taking into account capital expenditure to be supported by supported borrowing, and September inflation (at 3.6%), the effective change was minus 5.3%

The lack of transparency in the Formula Grant calculation makes it impossible to estimate the impact of higher inflation on service funding. Significant additional national funding would be needed to provide a higher grant floor.

An increase in the floor from 2.7% to the level of public sector inflation at 4.3% would have yielded KCC £3.6m more formula grant. A further £6.8m would be needed to meet the increase in unfunded “supported” borrowing.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr D Daley to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

In a recent debate in the House of Commons during the Second Reading of the Streetscape and Highways Design Bill a Member said:

‘There is a growing tendency towards the inclusion of advertisements on highway land, which is encouraged by some highway authorities. That is regrettable. We see advertisements on roundabouts, for example, which add to clutter and, as well as disfiguring the environment, presents a potential hazard for motorists, who have to take in those signs as well as relevant ones on the highway.’

In view of the general unease at the amount of cluttered signage already commonly seen during any drive, would the Cabinet Member agree with me that it would be reprehensible for this County Council to encourage advertising on lamp posts purely as a revenue-earner?

**Answer**

I agree that there are a number of places in Kent where sign proliferation is an issue. We are looking at this and taking action where appropriate.

There is a role for advertising on the highway, particularly where the sponsorship provides a well maintained roundabout or new streetlight column. Kent’s policy on signing is currently being up-dated to include provision for advertising but only where it is safe and appropriate to do so. The County Council is seeking a Consultant to identify suitable locations for highway sponsorship and advertising.

We must recognise that at a time when the County Council’s budgets are heavily constrained, we must seek to raise revenue where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mr G Koowaree to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please confirm which authorities outside Kent are using the Allington Incinerator for domestic waste disposal and can he please say what progress has been made in making arrangements for the disposal of domestic waste from East Kent?

**Answer**

The issue as to whether other waste disposal authorities have contracts with Allington Waste Ltd is not a matter for KCC. There is no locus for the County Council in respect of the commercial operation of the Allington plant, whether in respect of commercial or other public sector customers.

In respect of waste disposal for municipal waste from East Kent collection authorities, a range of options is being explored to provide optimum integration between the collection and disposal of waste. These options are being developed through the East Kent Chief Executives and their respective waste officers for each authority. This is a high priority to inform the development of Business Plan for 08/09 onwards, and is relevant to the waste development framework.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**21 June 2007**

**Question by Mrs T Dean to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please say with regard to clearance of Highways drains what the frequency of clearance is; whether residents are asked to remove parked vehicles in advance of clearance work; and whether he has plans to increase the frequency of drain clearance in view of mounting complaints and the changing position of rainfall to one of drought and storm, increasing run off amounts?

**Answer**

Kent has around 180,000 gullies which are cleaned annually.

Recently we introduced a more efficient system, recognising that all gullies need emptying at different rates. We clear routes in the top road hierarchy, ie dual carriageways and major strategic roads, more frequently, and most of our other roads on an 18 month to 2 year cycle.

In some areas, residents may be asked to move their cars in advance of the gully emptying. This is not consistent at present and sometimes residents are not co-operative. It is an issue that KHS intends to address.

KHS is not looking at a countywide increase in gully emptying frequency, but is working towards a system that allows the gullies in areas prone to flooding to be attended to sufficiently, especially in times of storm.

Gully emptying is not the only prevention of highway flooding, and KHS is also addressing the highest priority schemes that need underground work or new drainage systems.