
By: Alex King, Deputy Leader

To: Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
20 March 2012

Subject: **Ambition Boards**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Explains the rationale, role and membership of the three Ambition Boards, summarises progress to date and informs Members that a light-touch review of Ambition Boards is underway.

1. **Introduction**

- 1.1 In March 2011 the Kent Forum agreed to establish Ambition Boards as part of the Kent Forum architecture, one for each of the three countywide ambitions that are at the core of both the Vision for Kent and Bold Steps for Kent. The original rationale behind establishing the Ambition Boards was:
- to have a relentless focus on delivering outcomes supporting the relevant ambition
 - to support Locality Boards (when formed) in delivering local priorities
 - to absorb, oversee or otherwise manage the work of existing partnerships, with the emphasis on testing the purposefulness of existing partnerships
 - to improve efficiency by reducing the number, cost and bureaucracy associated with partnerships
 - wherever possible, take forward any additional responsibilities (statutory or other), rather than create additional partnerships
- 1.2 The core membership of each Board was set at four District Council Leaders, two County Council Cabinet Members, three or four District Council Chief Executives and one County Council Corporate Management Team member, thus bringing together Leaders with senior officers on a cross-agency basis.
- 1.3 The diagram in Appendix 1 helps explain the relationship of Ambition Boards to the Kent Forum and Locality Boards. The diagram in Appendix 2 sets out the potential roles of Ambition Boards, and Appendix 3 lists their membership.
- 1.4 Ambition Board agenda, minutes and papers are publicly available on the Kent Forum website www.kentforum.org.uk.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1. The first meetings of Ambition Boards 2 (To Tackle Disadvantage) and Ambition Board 3 (To Put Citizens in Control) were held soon after the elections. Establishing Ambition Board 1 (To Grow the Economy) was delayed pending conversations on how best to align the Ambition Board with the existing Kent Economic Board. This has now been resolved and a combination of the Ambition Board and leading representatives from KEB have met and scoped out shared priorities.
- 2.2. Ambition Board 1 (To Grow the Economy) has met twice. At its first meeting there was much discussion about what the key areas of focus for the Board should be, recognising that there are many 'players' in driving forward economic growth: businesses clearly play the key role and LEP, KEB, KCC and district/borough authorities each progress initiatives and activities for their respective audiences.
- 2.3. It was then agreed that the second meeting would focus on an analysis of the key growth priorities for the different agencies represented on the Board (business, district and county authorities), and the following criteria were used to determine where the Board could have greatest impact:
 - Is it a key stimulus for economic growth – do businesses view it as important?
 - Is the Board sure it is not duplicating work being undertaken/delivered elsewhere?
 - Will the Board add real value to the issue?
 - Is it strategic?
 - Are there real actions that can be delivered in the next year?
 - Is there potential for new forms of joint working/new solutions?
- 2.4. The Board agreed that it should focus on positive actions which have a measurable impact, including:
 - Planning – particularly the issues of consistency between authorities and how the growth levers of Community Infrastructure Levy, New Homes Bonus and Retained Business Rates can best be used to stimulate growth
 - Ways in which Kent businesses can better access public sector procurement processes
 - Development of a closer relationship with Higher Education
 - Stimulating trade development
 - Engaging with big businesses
 - Facilitation of discussions around the progress of the aviation debate.
- 2.5. The first meetings of Ambition Boards 2 and 3 concentrated on giving Members an overview of the Ambition and the challenges ahead. Each Ambition Board decided to retain its core membership and to invite contributions from other partners on an ad hoc basis depending on the agenda.
- 2.6. Subsequent meetings of Ambition Board 2 and 3 have focused on each Board discussing how it can make the biggest impact on their ambition, and the approach they wish to take. The Boards' discussions have been informed by the feedback from the Vision for Kent consultation exercise. This has led to

both Boards identifying an overall theme for their ambition with a small number of supporting aims which will make a difference. Neither Board wishes to embark upon massive work programmes which will be difficult to resource or sustain. Both wish to be realistic and build confidence in this new style of operating.

2.7. Ambition Board 2 (**To Tackle Disadvantage – To Create Opportunities**) has met five times. Disadvantage is a broad and complex issue with many of the causes and solutions to disadvantage spanning all three Ambition Boards. Within this context Ambition Board 2 has identified that its long-term aim should be **tackling family poverty**, and the Board will work with Ambition Boards 1 and 3 and other organisations to achieve this. It has identified actions where it can bring together key activity, fostering a shared understanding of the issues. It intends to act as a change agent and champion for the aims it has identified, taking a practical approach to identifying new actions and initiatives that it can lead to contribute to tackling family poverty. Its supporting aims are:

1. Create the conditions for families to change their own circumstances (developing actions based on the family poverty needs assessment)
2. Maximise the positive impact that Children's Centres have on Kent's children and families
3. Tackle fuel poverty and help reduce the burden of energy costs on Kent families
4. Encourage people to make healthy lifestyle choices and improve their resilience, in order to tackle health inequalities
5. Ensure that Kent's social housing needs are met in the future, so that disadvantaged and vulnerable people and families have access to housing that meets their needs
6. Maximise the positive effects and minimise the potential negative effects of welfare reform proposals on Kent, particularly on disadvantaged people and families
7. Minimise bureaucracy in delivering Ambition 2 across the county and maintain the benefits of partnership working

2.8. Ambition Board 3 (**To Put the Citizen in Control**) has met three times. It has agreed a broad overarching theme: '**For power and influence to be in the hands of local people so they are able to take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities**'. The Board has identified a small number of actions and deliverables which aim to balance a desire to make an impact with considerations around the resource available to support the Board. It intends to act as a think tank, change agent and champion for the ambition through understanding the issues and promoting best practice, supporting new ways of working and a collaborative approach, and resolving barriers faced by partners to putting citizens in control. Its supporting aims are:

1. Engagement – To give people an effective say in decisions and service development and delivery.

2. Empowerment – Empower Parish/Town Councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector to take responsibility and deliver certain services locally.

3. Personalisation and Responsible Citizenship – Encourage citizens to take responsibility to adopt lifestyle choices that reduce demand on public services and improves the quality of life for themselves and their communities. (This links closely with Ambition Board 2).

4. Partnership rationalisation – Minimise bureaucracy involved in delivering Ambition 3 across the county and maintain the benefits of partnership working.

Reporting to the Kent Forum

2.9. Now that all the Boards are up and running each meeting of the Kent Forum is programmed to have a progress report from one of the Ambition Boards in turn – i.e. each Ambition Board reports to the Kent Forum twice a year. This gives the Kent Forum the opportunity to discuss progress towards the three countywide ambitions and to steer the work of the Ambition Boards accordingly.

3. Next Steps

3.1 The support to the Kent Forum is changing as part of the restructuring of Business Strategy. Instead of a Kent Partnerships Team, support is now delivered from within the new Policy and Strategic Relationships Team, headed by David Whittle. Debra Exall will take the lead role within that team on supporting the Kent Forum, and as part of her induction to her new role she has been visiting District Leaders and Chief Executives to seek their views about how things are working in order to ensure that they are getting the support they need to make the system work effectively. Even though it is early days for Ambition Boards, there is an opportunity now to reflect on their role, operation and focus, so Debra has been commissioned to do a light touch review of the Ambition Boards, which will report to the Kent Forum in May.

3.2 Although at the time of writing this paper not all the District Leaders and Chief Executives had been interviewed, it is already apparent that there is considerable diversity of view about the role of Ambition Boards and not everyone agrees that the Ambition Boards should occupy all the territory set out in Appendix 2. It is also clear that each Ambition Board is operating in a unique way. Ambition Board 1 is only just getting going, but includes business representatives as well as Leaders and Chief Executives. Ambition Board 2 has had focussed discussions about health inequalities, the family poverty needs assessment, social housing, welfare reform and community budgets, but it is too early to evidence its impact. Ambition Board 3 is still struggling to identify how it can best add value beyond sharing experiences, good practice and understanding (e.g. in relation to the Localism Act, customer engagement, civic rights and responsibilities, and the Big Society).

3.3 District Leaders are, however, united in their view that the Ambition Boards must not be a vehicle for county strategies to be rubber stamped. They must genuinely provide the opportunity for different agencies to shape and develop future activity collectively, where it adds value to operate in this way.

- 3.4 For the County Council, the three Ambitions are at the heart of Bold Steps for Kent, and it is timely to consider whether, and if so how, the Ambition Boards are the best way to promote and champion the ambitions in the context of fast-evolving partnerships. The light-touch review will address this, and a report of the findings will be brought back to the new Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee.

Recommendations

Members of Corporate Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee are asked to NOTE:

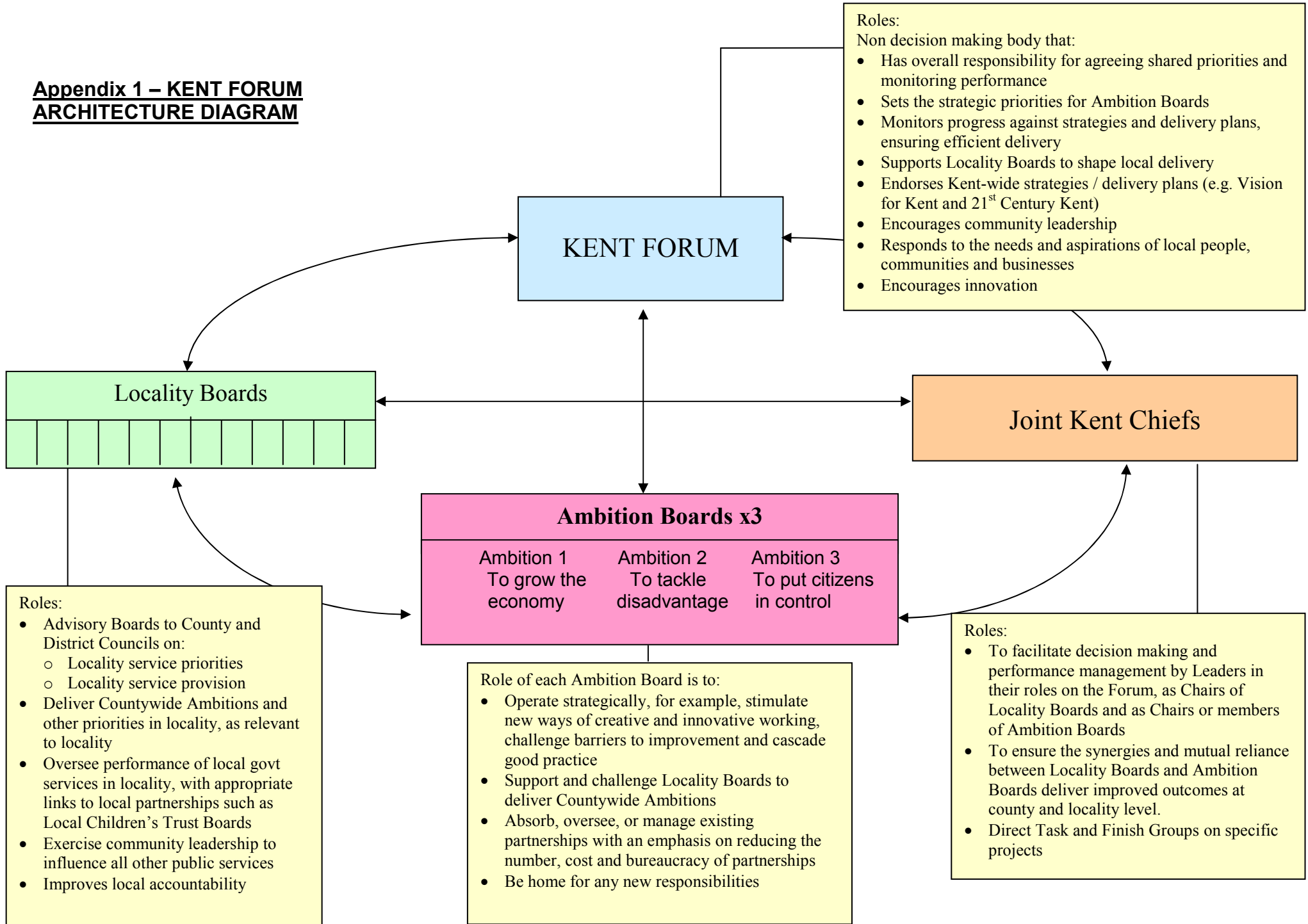
- 1. The progress of Ambition Boards to date**
- 2. That a review of Ambition Boards is underway.**

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Background Papers:

Paper to Kent Forum on 28 Jan 2011 on Ambition Boards

Appendix 1 – KENT FORUM ARCHITECTURE DIAGRAM



Appendix 2

Ambition Board Models

Model 1

Model 2

Model 3

CHANGE AGENT

- Identify creative and innovative working such as pooling resources, shared commissioning, using alternative providers
- Pilot new ways of working,
- Implement cross-Kent approaches

CHAMPIONING

(Common to both Model 2 and 3)

- Champion ambition countywide and nationally
- Exchange best practice across Locality Boards
- Pooling ideas / resources
- Promote culture of collaboration
- Resolve barriers
- Align / absorb partnerships
- Influence other public service providers

CHALLENGING

- Test whether there is support from partner agencies is helping to deliver the ambition
- On behalf of Kent Forum, hold Locality Boards to account
- Scrutinise Locality Boards' (or other local arrangements') focus on the County-wide Ambitions
- Performance Review against agreed PIs/ project implementation

Appendix 3

Ambition Boards Membership

Ambition Board 1:

Name	Position	Organisation
John Gilbey	Leader	Canterbury City Council
Paul Watkins	Leader	Dover District Council
John Burden	Leader	Gravesham Borough Council
Chris Garland	Leader	Maidstone Borough Council
Kevin Lynes (Chair)	Cabinet Member	Kent County Council
John Simmonds	Cabinet Member	Kent County Council
John Bunnett	Chief Executive	Ashford Borough Council
Graham Harris	Chief Executive	Dartford Borough Council
William Benson	Chief Executive	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
David Cockburn	Chief Officer	Kent County Council
Barbara Cooper	Director of E.D.	Kent County Council
Geoff Miles	KEB Chairman	Maidstone Studios
Douglas Horner	Business rep	Trenport Investments Ltd
Paul Winter	Business rep	Wire Belt Company Ltd
Graham Brown	Business rep	Denne Construction Ltd
Stephen Gobbi	Business rep	Peel Ports
Jon Regan	Business rep	High Lowe Farms Ltd and Weald Granary Ltd

In addition, it has been agreed that members from the Forum's Steering Group on Planning will join Ambition Board 1 for discussions on planning. This will include Mark Worrall (Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council), Peter Wood (Leader of Ashford Borough Council) and Bryan Sweetland (KCC Cabinet Member).

Ambition Board 2:

Name	Position	Organisation
Peter Wood	Leader	Ashford Borough Council
Peter Fleming	Leader	Sevenoaks District Council
Clive Hart	Leader	Thanet District Council
Mark Worrall	Leader	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Brian Cope	Chairman	Kent Fire and Rescue Authority
Graham Gibbens (Chair)	Cabinet Member	Kent County Council
Jenny Whittle	Cabinet Member	Kent County Council
Colin Carmichael	Chief Executive	Canterbury City Council
Nadeem Aziz	Chief Executive	Dover District Council
Alison Broom	Chief Executive	Maidstone Borough Council
Alistair Stewart	Chief Executive	Shepway District Council
Abdool Kara	Chief Executive	Swale Borough Council
Andrew Ireland	Chief Officer	Kent County Council

Ambition Board 3:

Name	Position	Organisation
Jeremy Kite	Leader	Dartford Borough Council
Robert Bliss	Leader	Shepway District Council
Andrew Bowles (Chair)	Leader	Swale Borough Council
Robert Atwood	Leader	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Mike Hill	Cabinet Member	Kent County Council
Bryan Sweetland	Cabinet Member	Kent County Council
David Hughes	Chief Executive	Gravesham Borough Council/ Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Sue McGonigal	Chief Executive	Thanet District Council
Robin Hales	Chief Executive	Sevenoaks District Council
Ann Millington	Chief Executive	Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Amanda Honey	Chief Officer	Kent County Council