

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 14 May 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, Dr T R Robinson and Mr J D Simmonds

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R A Marsh

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Gilroy (Chief Executive), Mr G Badman (Managing Director of Children, Families and Education), Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mr O Mills (Managing Director - Adult Social Services) Ms L McMullan, Director of Finance, Meridan Peachey, Director of Public Health and Mr P Raine, Managing Director for Regeneration and Environment.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 April 2007
(Item. 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2007 were agreed as a true record.

2. Select Committee: Transitional Arrangements
(Item. 2 - Report by Mr K G Lynes, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services, and Dr T Robinson, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services)

(Mr A Bowles and Mr T Maddison were present for this item)

(1) The Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee established a Select Committee to look at the issue of Transitional Arrangements to adult life and services for disabled children and young people and children and young people with a learning difficulty, including those who are Looked After. The review explored the extent to which Kent County Council's transitional policies and joint working particularly between Social Services, Education, health services and partners are able to meet the needs and expectations of these young people in Kent.

(2) Mr Lynes said that it was essential to provide the right level of support and resources available to disabled and young people and those who had learning difficulties to ensure they had a smooth a transition as possible to accessing Adult Services. Putting forward proposals aimed at a more seamless transition to adult life and services was one of the specific targets set out in the County Council's "Towards 2010" document and he proposed that an Informal Member Group should be established to undertake a piece of focussed work around some of the important issues raised by the Select Committee. He proposed the IMG should initially report to Dr Robinson and himself and its findings included as part of the overall report to

the County Council in September.

(3) Mr Bowles said that he supported the comments made by Mr Lynes. Whilst the Select Committee had kept close to its terms of reference, it was obvious there were issues which could have taken it in a wider direction. He therefore welcomed the fact that there would be some more detailed work undertaken. Mr Bowles said one of the things which the Select Committee wanted to see addressed was the issue of ensuring that there was an equitable service across the county in terms of access and delivery. The Select Committee had looked at best practice in other areas and Mr Bowles commended in particular the work being done in Hampshire which had had produced a transition handbook and multi-agency guide and he hoped something similar could be produced in Kent. Mr Bowles said that he particularly wanted to see the introduction of transition workers with the specific role working with and co-ordinating support for these young people. He also supported the concept of peer mentoring and resources being made available to help

facilitate better training. The overall aim and objective was to do all that was possible to ensure these young people had the best possible chance.

(4) Mr Maddison said that he was pleased with the outcome of the work of the Select Committee and he too paid thanks to all those who had given it their time and support. He commended particularly Recommendation 12 which speaks about exploring the potential of establishing a programme whereby disabled young adults are employed as peer mentors to assist with transition planning in schools and elsewhere. Transition can for some be a very difficult time and he hoped that the report would be seen as providing a template for future work and for bringing about more consistency in provision and support. Mr Koowaree also spoke about the important role of the transition worker as being someone who can provide continuity and support. He commended the Select Committee's report to Cabinet and thanked those who had supported it in its work.

(5) During discussion, Mr Oliver Mills said that this was a very complex subject and he welcomed the report and its recommendations. He said the Kent experience could be a mixed one and that was something which was often reflected in other parts of the country. However, the County Council working with its partners was committed to ensuring these young people had the best possible opportunities and outcomes wherever they lived in the county. Mr Mills also said that an Executive Board made up of key partners had been established and this was developing an action plan which would build on the work and recommendations that had been put forward by the Select Committee. Mr Badman said that he supported all which had been said and recommended the report should also be formally referred to the Connexions Board and to the Learning and Skills Council. This was agreed.

(6) Following further discussion, Mr Carter said that he supported the establishment of an Informal Member Group to look in more detail at some of the issues which had been raised by the Select Committee. He said he also wanted the Cabinet to look at these issues as well and to possibly come forward with some views of its own.

(7) Cabinet then:-

- (i) agreed that the Select Committee be thanked for its work and for producing a relevant and balanced document;
- (ii) the witnesses and others who provided evidence and made valuable contributions to the Select Committee be thanked; and

- (iii) that an Informal Member Group be established to undertake some more detailed and focussed work and for the outcomes to be referred initially to Mr Lynes and Dr Robinson following which a report will be submitted to a future meeting of the County Council.

3. Third Annual Report on Local Boards 2006/07

(Item. 3 - Report by Mr Alex King, Deputy Leader and Mr Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive)

(Mr John Wale was present for this item)

(1) This report provided information on local boards, joint local board pilots and gave an update on the neighbourhood forum pilots currently running in Dover. The report also detailed developments on the Localism agenda both in Kent and nationally and how member roles and new technology could influence future engagement with the public.

(2) During the course of discussion, Mr Carter said that there was still some work to do with regard to developing the local agenda and work with colleagues and partners was therefore ongoing. A significant step forward in this work had however been the signing of the Kent Commitment through which the local authorities in Kent would be working more closely to deliver the local agenda. Therefore it was important to build on the good start which had been achieved but there was a need to increase the pace of the work of the Informal Member Group in taking this work forward to a conclusion in the autumn.

(3) In considering the recommendations, Mr Carter proposed and Mr Chard seconded that recommendation (iii) set out in paragraph 23 of the report should be deleted in the interests of allowing greater freedom and flexibility for criteria within which awards are made, as long as they remained intra-vires. This was agreed.

(4) Cabinet agreed to:-

- (i) accept the annual report for 2006/07 on Local Boards, Joint Local Boards and Neighbourhood Forum pilots;
- (ii) endorse the continuing work of the Informal Member Group "Going Local" in looking at options and principles for the future direction of localism, having regard to the Kent Commitment, the Lyons' report and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, currently on its passage through Parliament; and
- (iii) agreed to co-ordinate the above work carefully with other work on future approaches, including the "Second Kent Agreement".

4. DfES Consultation on Schools, Early Years and 14-16 Funding

(Item. 4 - Report by Mr John Simmonds, Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement and Mr Graham Badman, Director for Children, Families and Education)

(Mr Keith Abbott, Director for Finance and Corporate Services, Children, Families and Education Directorate was present for this item)

(1) Mr Simmonds said that the DfES consultation paper contained little in the way of information on financial modelling and the impact some of the proposals would have on local authorities such as Kent. Therefore, at this stage it was difficult to come to a clear view on some of the options which were being put forward. The DfES had held a conference on the consultation paper and whilst that had provided little in the way of any additional detail, it did provide an indication as to the preferences that the DfES had on some of the options proposed. Mr Badman said that the remit of schools was much broader than just Education as a consequence of the Children's Act and they were now being asked to fund not just education but a range of children's services. He was also concerned at proposals to make a 5% levy on all schools with reserves regardless of the reasons those reserves were being held for. Mr Badman said he was concerned at this proposal because he felt it could encourage some schools to spend unwisely rather than see their reserves levied.

(2) Mr Abbott said that with other authorities in a similar position, the County Council would be meeting shortly with representatives from the DfES and GOSE to discuss the details of the Consultation. Whilst submissions in respect of the Consultation need to be presented by the end of June, it was likely that the outcome of the Consultation would not be known until November. There was therefore an ongoing opportunity for the County Council together with other authorities to continue lobbying on the issues raised within the Consultation paper. Mr Gilroy said the DfES was setting both high specifications and expectations but was not making the resources available in order to meet those. The proposals set out in the Consultation would not only affect education provision but would have an impact on the County Council's financial plans as a whole. Therefore it was essential that the County Council put forward a clear case setting out its concerns.

(3) Mr Chard said that the proposals needed to be looked at in the round, as they had implications for the Council's budget as a whole. He agreed it was important to work with other counties within the South-East who were in a similar position to that of Kent.

(4) Mr Carter said local authorities such as Kent could no longer be asked to provide increased services on less money and therefore the County Council should join with other authorities within the South-East to develop a concerted and constructive campaign in relation to the proposals set out in the Consultation paper. He therefore proposed, and it was agreed that the County Council should work with the School's Forum and other authorities in the South-East in putting to Government a robust and collective response to the Consultation. If necessary that should be supported by obtaining an independent assessment of current need and resources. In addition Mr Simmonds proposed and Mr Chard seconded that they, together with officers should be authorised to sign off the County Council's response to the Consultation paper once the modelling work had been completed. This was agreed.

(3) Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the latest DfES proposals in relation to schools, Early Years and 14-16 funding;

- (b) approved that Mr Chard and Mr Simmonds together with officers be authorised to sign off the County Council's formal response once the final modelling had been completed; and
- (c) the County Council should work with the School's Forum and other authorities within the South-East in putting forward to Government a robust and collective response to the Consultation paper. To support that work an independent assessment should be commissioned of current need and resources.

5. Public Health Strategy for Kent

(Item. 5 - Report by Mr Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Public Health)

(Mr Mark Lemon was present for this item)

(1) Mr Gibbens said that the Consultation document had been circulated to key stakeholder and partners for comment and consideration prior to formal adoption by PCT Boards and County Council. It was crucial that all KCC directorates, NHS colleagues and District Councils were involved in developing the final iteration of this document so that it could be taken to the wider public as the foundation of a public consultation on the various elements of public health provision in Kent and the priorities for action. He said the six outcomes detailed in Section 18 of the Strategy, presented some challenging statistics which some people may feel uncomfortable about. However, those outcomes put clearly into context the tasks and issues which faced public health. In developing the strategy it was important that the County Council should not be seen as trying to impose a "nanny state" but as developing with its partners the strategies and processes which would enable people to make informed choices and live a healthier life. The strategy would also form the basis for further discussions about how public health in the county needed to develop and in particular, how public health priorities should be reflected in the next round of strategic plans of both the County Council (for example, as part of Local Area Agreement 2) and the NHS. Further consultation and development of the document was ongoing and this would lead to it forming the basis for discussion on health issues at the special meeting of the County Council taking place in July.

(2) Meridan Peachey said that the report identified a number of key issues and action areas on which there needed to be more focus. These included issues around smoking, childhood obesity and teenage pregnancy rates. She said the document recognised and detailed the scope and scale of public health activity across the county and it would need to reflect and take on board the views received during the consultation period before being finalised.

(3) Mr Hill said that the report focused to a number of important issues but that the statistics relating to health and inequalities needed careful and in depth analysis. Mr Ferrin said that it would be wrong to think that some of the health and inequality issues identified in the report were a district issue as they were in fact more at ward and sub-ward level. What he was more concerned about was how outcomes would be achieved and there needed to be more discussion about that. Mr Lynes said that he saw the County Council's role in these matters as being to highlight issues and bring about changes in lifestyles so that people could make more informed choices. He said that innovations such as Kent TV could be used as

part of bringing that message to Kent's residents.

(4) Mr Gilroy said that he agreed that statistics can be misleading and he recommended that the numbers and figures indicated in the report should be separated out and put into separate appendices. This was agreed. He said he also wanted the document to contain a section which detailed and focussed on those priorities which were achievable over the next two to three years. He also spoke about the effect which the advertising industry had on the choices that people make about their lifestyles and said there were also issues around parental attitudes and how they reflect on children and young people. Mr Badman said that a key health issue was that of obesity which had risen by 50% since 1997. This was not just an issue not just in children as the number of adults with obesity was also steadily increasing.

(5) At the conclusion of the debate, Mr Carter said that the County Council placed great emphasis on developing a robust health strategy for Kent and this was reflected in the fact it was holding a special meeting of the County Council on 24 July to discuss these issues. He said that he wanted to see the strategy developed into a more concise document which reflected the points raised during the course of the discussion. This was agreed.

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

This report provided a summary of outcomes and progress on matters arising from the meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held on 25 April 2007. The report also set out the work programme for Select Committee Topic Review as agreed by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee and provided an update on the current status of each Topic Review.