

By: Overview and Scrutiny Manager

To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 7 June 2007

Subject: **SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEW WORK PROGRAMME – UPDATE**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To receive an update on the current Topic Reviews and to invite the Committee to set out its priorities for the Work Programme for the period Autumn 2007 to Autumn 2008 including how the programme should be resourced.

Recently Completed Topic Reviews

Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)/Children's Health Select Committee

1. (1) This Select Committee under the chairmanship of Ms J Cribbon reported to the Cabinet on 16 April 2007 when there was an extremely good debate about the issue.

(2) The report will now be presented at the special meeting of the County Council on 24 July which is being planned to discuss a number of health related issues.

Transitional Arrangements for Young People

2. (1) The Select Committee under the chairmanship of Mr A Bowles submitted its report to the Cabinet on 14 May 2007. The report of the Select Committee was well received by the Cabinet.

(2) It was the decision of the Cabinet that Mr Lynes and Dr Robinson should establish an Informal Member Group to include a representative of the Select Committee to consider the recommendations and how they can be taken forward. The Select Committee report will be presented to the County Council in the autumn.

Current Phase of the Work Programme – Spring 2007 to Autumn 2007

Alcohol Misuse

3. (1) This Select Committee under the chairmanship of Mr J B O Fullarton held its first meeting on 16 May 2007 when it agreed the Terms of Reference, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1. Hearings for the Select Committee are scheduled to take place during mid June to the end of July 2007. It is intended that the report of this Select Committee will be submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 December 2007.

(2) The review is focussing on the public health aspects of alcohol misuse. However, the Committee will wish to note that at the Communities Policy Overview Committee on 9 May the Committee indicated it was keen to see the criminality aspect of alcohol misuse addressed. For this reason the Committee may wish to note now that the work of this Select Committee may lead to further related pieces of work.

Carers in Kent

4. The first meeting of this Select Committee is scheduled for 5 June 2007 when they will agree the scope of the review and Terms of Reference. The Chairman Designate is Mr L Christie. Hearings for the Select Committee will be held during the summer. It is intended that the report of this Select Committee will also be submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet on 3 December 2007.

Preparation of Prospective Topic Reviews

5. (1) The Committee also decided at its meeting on 15 February 2007 that the following subject matters should be given further consideration at this June meeting:-

- (a) **Accessing Democracy** – including the possibility of incorporating an element of the “Students Voice” proposal for a Select Committee Topic Review. At the last meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 15 February 2007, it was agreed that programming of this Topic Review should take into account the work of the IMG on Going Local; and
- (b) **Developing the Creative Curriculum** – including the possibility in this review of including aspects of “Arts Provision in outlying or rural areas” which was suggested at the Topic Review.

(2) In relation to Accessing Democracy, I have met with the proposer of the Topic Review on Accessing Democracy, Mrs Angell, who is very keen that a piece of work is undertaken on how the County Council engages with “hard-to-reach groups”. This is a key area of activity where the County Council will need to demonstrate for the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) that it has evidence to show that it does engage effectively with all members of society.

(3) However, I am aware that the Cabinet received a report from the Leader and Oliver Mills in April on the County Council’s Equality Strategy 2007-2010 and that there is evidence of good practice across the Directorates.

(4) The Committee might wish to consider whether a short Select Committee to review and pull together the various threads of activity relating to how the County Council engages “hard to reach groups” might be beneficial in the autumn. Attached as Appendix 2 is the proposal form and some further background information.

Potential Two Year Work Programme

6. (1) The Committee are reminded that the following topics were also identified at the August 2006 meeting for possible inclusion in the Two Year Work Programme, subject to further information or refocusing:-

- **Young people's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, values-based education and behaviour;**
- **Consultation and participation with children and young people (Student Voice);**
- **Provision of activities for young people;**
- **Impact of supermarkets and out-of-town shopping malls/retail parks on businesses in Kent.**

Potential New Items for Inclusion in the Work Programme

7. (1) Potential new items for inclusion in the Work Programme include the following, for which proposal forms are attached:-

- **Vulnerable children** – the Committee are reminded that at the last meeting of the Committee I reported that the Leader of the Council had indicated to me that he would like to see included in the Work Programme a piece of work which focused on Looked After Children and how their life outcomes could be improved. After further discussion with Directorate colleagues, the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Education & School Improvement, the suggestion has been refocused to a piece of work around vulnerable children. The proposal form for this review is attached as Appendix 3 for the Committee's consideration.
- **Flood Risk** – Members will recall that previous Select Committees have looked at the issues of flooding in Kent following the floods of 2000 and 2001 as well as climate change. The Climate Change Select Committee was chaired by Mr Wells and its report was extremely well received by the Cabinet and the County Council. The Committee may be interested to know that the County Council has been asked to facilitate a workshop at the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference in London on 13 June to talk about the Climate Change report.

I have recently received a proposal form for another piece of work identified by Mrs Hohler relating to Flood Risk which is attached as Appendix 4. I have not yet had the opportunity to fully investigate the issues but I suspect they are the same as those raised with Dr Eddy by West Sussex County Council which was drawn to the attention of the Committee at its last meeting.

NHS Overview and Scrutiny – Potential New Items for Inclusion in the Work Programme

8. (1) A consultation document on the review of health services across Kent and Medway known as **Fit for the Future** is to be launched early in July. Changes to Health Services across the County will be undertaken as a rolling programme. It will be for the NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee to determine what service changes within this programme will require consultation. A possible subject for a Select Committee within the NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committees purview is **Access to Healthcare**. Members who have attended meetings of the County Council's NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be aware that almost without exception one of the issues which is raised in any debate is the issue of access to health services and the related matter of how health inequalities are being addressed. Proposals likely to arise from the **Fit for the Future** Topic Review and the push towards providing more care in the community will have a significant impact on this agenda. This is not an issue that can be tackled by one organisation and needs a number of key partners and stakeholders to work together. With that in mind, this is another piece of work that would be of value to the County Council and other partner organisations and is fully supported by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Health, Mr G Gibbens.

Resources to deliver the Work Programme

9. (1) I now have one and a half full time research officers supporting the Select Committee Topic Review Programme. In addition the Committee are aware that I have one additional research officer whose time is dedicated entirely to the NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(2) At the last meeting I informed the Committee that the funding for the six monthly training posts from the Graduate Development Programme will cease because of budgetary constraints at the end of September 2007. This will mean that there is no guarantee that a trainee will automatically be placed with my team, although it is well recognised across the County Council that the opportunity to work on a Select Committee is an excellent placement opportunity.

(3) At the meeting in February no specific Topic Review was allocated to the graduate trainee who was allocated to my Team at the beginning of April. That graduate was very keen to be closely involved with a Select Committee Topic Review but as there was not a piece of work sufficiently prepared or currently in the agreed programme by mutual agreement I have released the graduate from the placement.

(4) The placement process for the Graduate Scheme is being changed so there is no guarantee that I will be successful in an application to host a trainee in the future. I cannot therefore guarantee that should the Committee identify a Topic from the programme it will be resourced using the Graduate Programme until the Advisory Board for the programme has met and graduates have been allocated to a placement.

(5) I would therefore remind the Committee that the only available research resource that can be guaranteed at this stage from 1 October 2007 is one and a half

full time equivalent members of staff and they will be unable to start a review until their current reviews on the Alcohol Misuse and Carers in Kent are completed.

(6) It is also worth reminding the Committee that in addition to the one and a half full time equivalent research officers there are three Democratic Services Officers to support the Select Committee activity.

Recommendations

The Committee are requested to:-

- (a) note the progress of the two Select Committee Topic Reviews which are currently under way, Carers in Kent and Alcohol Misuse;
- (b) agree which two topics should be the subject of Select Committee Topic Reviews which will start their work in the Autumn of 2007 and end their work in the Spring of 2008;
- (c) confirm which topics should continue to be included in the work programme to be allocated Topic Reviews when resources become available (paragraph 6 refers); and
- (d) agree to the establishment of a NHS Topic Review when resources become available.

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Background Information: *Include ALL background information taken into account in preparing the report. (This does not include previous Committee Reports)*

Alcohol Misuse Select Committee

Terms of Reference

1. Background

It is widely accepted that excessive consumption of alcohol is a growing social and public-health problem in the UK, with a marked increase in the numbers drinking regularly and to excess.

This is partly attributable to the fact that alcohol has become cheaper and more readily available. Also, patterns of drinking have changed – with alcohol abuse becoming more socially acceptable, and increasing numbers of women (particularly younger women) drinking excessive levels of alcohol.

Health problems that are known to be associated with excessive alcohol consumption include:

- brain damage;
- alcohol poisoning;
- cancer;
- liver disease (cirrhosis);
- circulatory disease;
- high blood-pressure;
- damage to the nervous system;
- mental-health problems;
- impaired reproductive health;
- elevated risk of sexually-transmitted infections (associated with more risky sexual behaviour); and
- trauma (associated with accidents and violence).

Drinking to excess is one of the leading causes of disease, injury, disability and premature death. The annual number of alcohol-related deaths in the UK more than doubled between 1991 and 2005 (when the figure was 8,386). It is estimated that some 17 million working days, costing £6.4 billion, are lost in the UK each year due to alcohol-related sickness absence. Alcohol abuse also contributes to health inequalities.

Some public-health interventions (such as breath-testing of drivers and legal restrictions on the sale of alcohol) are known to be effective in reducing alcohol-related harm.

2. Terms of reference

- To map out, in respect of the administrative County of Kent, on the basis of available evidence, the extent of alcohol abuse and the public-health implications of the issue.

- To consider what public-health initiatives¹ might be undertaken to address alcohol abuse in Kent, having regard to national-government policies, and existing national and local best practice.
- To explore the possible role of collaborative working (with the 12 district authorities in Kent, local NHS Bodies, schools and other partners) in delivering initiatives on this issue.
- To take account of the work of the Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team, and consider innovative ways of delivering alcohol related services.
- To consider the impact of alcohol abuse on NHS Accident and Emergency departments – with reference to pressure on services and assaults on NHS staff.
- To identify vulnerable groups where alcohol abuse is most prevalent and focus on action that KCC could take to reach those groups.
- To explore funding streams to support the implementation of initiatives on this issue.
- To make specific recommendations on this issue for Kent County Council and partner organisations.

¹ The standard typology of public-health interventions is as follows: health protection; preventive medicine; health education; healthy public policy; community empowerment.

ASSESSMENT OF A SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEW

(* - sections to be filled in by the proposer of the topic)

<p>*Subject of Proposed Review:-</p> <p>Accessing Democracy</p>
<p>*Reason for the Review:- (see note 1 below)</p> <p>People who are described as 'hard to reach' are precisely/may be who do not get involved with any form of democratic process. Often alienated by forms of perceived authority, those described as 'hard to reach' are precisely that. Authority does not actively engage to enable/assist involvement. They therefore are not part of the 'focus groups/citizens panels' so often used to gauge public opinion on matters, enabling the authority to tick the box regarding 'consultation'. Yet they are often the users of the services provided by the authority.</p> <p>This would be an attempt to get more active involvement from the community of users of KCC services, and enable a more representative and broader view from the population of Kent to be heard.</p>
<p>*Issues to be covered by the Terms of Reference:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discover why people do not engage To discover what would/could get people to engage To assess how KCC could assist in that process To obtain links with organisations and networks to assist/facilitate engagement with 'hard to reach' groups
<p>*Scope of the review:-</p> <p>Interviews, desk research, call for evidence from organisations appropriate</p>
<p>*Purpose and objectives of the Review:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To enable active involvement of those hard to reach groups in local decision making. ▪ To facilitate and encourage active involvement from groups and individuals not previously involved ▪ To prepare guidelines and support where necessary, for KCC to enable all departments to facilitate involvement of those people previously described as 'hard to reach'
<p>Proposer of the review Christine Angell</p>

To be completed by the Directorate/Cabinet Member(s)

Are there any reasons why this review should not be put forward for inclusion in the work programme for 2006/07?

(see note 2 below)

No

How will the review contribute to corporate objectives and priorities?

Engagement of all Kent residents in local decision making will strengthen and has the potential to improve the decisions taken. This proposed review comes at a time when the County Council through the IMG "Going Local" is considering how the County Council can respond to service delivery with a structure of local democracy which builds on the Local Board structure, or a yet to be defined neighbourhood/community.

Will the review support the achievement of PSA or LAA targets? If yes, please identify targets:-

See the entry in the box immediately above

Does the review need to be completed within a specific timeframe? If yes, please give details:-

No – but arguably such a review could complement the work of the Informal Member Group and the County Council as it develops its structures for responding to the Governments White Paper which will become the Local Government Act 2007 and the inquiry of Sir Michael Lyons.

How will this review have an impact on KCC policy development and/or help to influence national policy?

See the box above on how will the review contribute to corporate priorities and objectives.

How will this review add value to the County Council and residents of Kent?

This review has the potential to add significant value to the County Council. By exploring:-

- ways of engaging the community,
- demonstrating that residents views are important and have been listened to whether they are acted upon or not, and
- empowering Kent's residents

which could lead to:-

- greater interest in those who want to contribute more to public service; and
- be a catalyst to the further modernisation of the Democratic Services unit.

Any additional comments from the Portfolio Holder/Strategic Director:-

Portfolio Holder's Signature:- Alex King

Strategic Director's Signature:- Geoff Wild

Contact Officer:- Paul Wickenden

Date:- 27.07.06

ASSESSMENT OF A SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEW

(* - sections to be filled in by the proposer of the topic)

<p>*Subject of Proposed Review:-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN</p>
<p>*Reason for the Review:-</p> <p>Nationally the outcomes for Looked After Children fall far below those of other children and young people. Research shows that Looked After Children are significantly disadvantaged when compared to their peers on a range of areas in their lives. For example, Children in care have been found to have lower levels of academic achievement than their peers (Brooks and Barth, 1998; Zima et al 2000), are seven times more likely to be excluded, six times more likely to be truant and three times more likely to have special needs (Evans 2001). Children in care also experience more health problems compared with their peers. More than 75% of care leavers have no academic qualifications of any kind (Biehal et al 1995), with more than 50% unemployed (Sinclair and Gibbs, 1996).</p> <p>As a consequence members are keen that this needs group receive close attention. In 2001 the Social Services Scrutiny Committee undertook a review of Kent's policy and practice for Looked After Children. In 2004 Members commissioned the Thanet Enquiry. More recently, in response to 'Care Matters' and Kent's ambitions for this group of children, the Managing Director CFE commissioned a review of services for looked after children commencing December 2006. The purpose of this review is to identify innovation, strategies and services for improvement. Once the work is complete a full report will be made to Members.</p> <p>However, an important area of work that has already been identified for action is Other Local Authority children (OLA) who are placed in Kent. There is an urgent need to develop policy and strategy for OLA as the high volume of OLA placed in Kent is of strategic importance to the LA and has a national profile. It is therefore proposed that a Member Topic Review on OLA placed in Kent is progressed to inform policy development and enhance active lobbying at a national level.</p> <p>This Topic Review proposal will involve assessing the impact and cost of OLA children on Kent infra structure as well as the impact on outcomes for Other Local Authority young people. This work will inform the development of Kent policy in relation to these children and further inform a consistent county strategy for the Leader and Cabinet to pursue these issues on behalf of Kent at a national level as required.</p>
<p>*Issues to be covered by the Terms of Reference:-</p> <p>Impact of Other Local Authority children on the Kent infrastructure</p> <p>Costs to the people of Kent</p> <p>Impact on the children of being placed outside of their communities</p>

Identify best practice for OLA LAC to achieve improved outcomes and likely cost to Kent

Produce a framework to guide the development of national protocols on placing children out of local authority or long distances from home.

Develop a strategy for influencing the national agenda

***Scope of the review:-**

This will be a time limited piece of work linked to the government timescales for Care Matters Next Steps. It will focus specifically on issues around the impact that large numbers of children and young people being placed in Kent by other Local Authorities has on Kent's ability to meet their needs and those of the wider community.

***Purpose and objectives of the Review:-**

Inform the development of a Kent strategy and policy in relation to OLA

Improve outcomes for these children

Reduce impact and cost to Kent at a national level

Influence national decision making at the highest level

Proposer of the review:-

.....Paul Carter.....

To be completed by the Directorate/Cabinet Member(s)

Are there any reasons why this review should not be put forward for inclusion in the work programme for 2006/07?

(see note 2 below)

The review is extremely timely in light of Care Matters and will underpin work already being progressed on all Looked After Children

How will the review contribute to corporate objectives and priorities?

LAA/PSA2

Promote better outcomes on range of Care Matters proposals.

Will the review support the achievement of PSA or LAA targets? If yes, please identify targets:-

See above.

Does the review need to be completed within a specific timeframe? If yes, please give details:-

Yes. The review could contribute to the self evaluation for the JAR due in November – It will inform CFE on improving outcomes for LAC and support the implementation of Care Matters

How will this review have an impact on KCC policy development and/or help to influence national policy?

This is already highlighted in the previous sections


How will this review add value to the County Council and residents of Kent?

Contribute to reducing dependency (2010 and LAA/PSA.2)

Contribute to the JAR and Star rating.

Any additional comments from the Portfolio Holder/Strategic Director:-

Portfolio Holder's Signature:-



Strategic Director's Signature:-



Contact Officer :-
Kay Weiss

Date :-
15 May 2007

ASSESSMENT OF A SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEW

(* - sections to be filled in by the proposer of the topic)

<p>*Subject of Proposed Review :-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Flood Risk</p>
<p>*Reason for the Review :- (see note 1 below)</p> <p>Concern that flooding is an increased risk in Kent and we need to be satisfied that flood agencies are robust and the Environment Agency has systems in place.</p>
<p>*Issues to be covered by the Terms of Reference:-</p> <p>Flood defences – current state and planned projects and financing of these.</p> <p>Emergency procedures and information.</p>
<p>*Scope of the review:-</p> <p>To include East Sussex either as partners in the review or as key endorsers/partners in our work.</p>
<p>*Purpose and objectives of the Review:-</p> <p>To show that Kent County Council is aware of flooding risks and doing all it can to protect people and property in Kent by highlighting the risks.</p>
<p>Proposer of the review</p> <p style="text-align: center;">.....Sarah Hohler</p>

To be completed by the Directorate/Cabinet Member(s)

Are there any reasons why this review should not be put forward for inclusion in the work programme for 2006/07?
(see note 2 below)

Work to be completed by end of October, before severe Autumn/Winter weather.

How will the review contribute to corporate objectives and priorities?

Looking after Kent residents

Will the review support the achievement of PSA or LAA targets? If yes, please identify targets:-

Does the review need to be completed within a specific timeframe? If yes, please give details:-

Before onset of Autumn storms

How will this review have an impact on KCC policy development and/or help to influence national policy?

Enforce planning decisions not to build on flood plains and ensure sufficient funding for defences.

How will this review add value to the County Council and residents of Kent?

By minimising damage to people and property from avoidable flooding.

Any additional comments from the Portfolio Holder/Strategic Director:-

Excellent Timing for the review.

Portfolio Holder's Signature:-

Strategic Director's Signature:-



Contact Officer:-

Geoff HARRISON - MCE

Date:-

31.05.07

Notes

Note 1 - Possible reasons for the review

1. Key public issue, identified by
 - Focus groups/citizens panels
 - Member contact with constituents/member surgeries
 - Contact with key representative bodies/forums
 - Media coverage – Public interest issue covered in local media
2. Issue highlighted via POC activities or previous reviews
3. Issue recommended to POC by another body e.g. another POC, Cabinet Scrutiny, Directorate, Cabinet or an external body.
4. Poor performing service i.e.:-
 - High level of complaints/dissatisfaction with service
 - Performance standards poor/below target – (evidence from PI's or benchmarking)
 - Identified through external review/inspection (OFSTED/Audit/ CPA etc)
 - Budgetary overspends
5. Key reports or new evidence published
6. County Council priority
7. Central Government priority/New Government guidance or legislation published

Note 2 - Possible reasons why a review should not be put into the next years/ next two years work

1. Issue being examined by
 - Cabinet
 - Cabinet Scrutiny
 - Officer Group
 - another internal body
 - an external body
2. It has been the subject of a topic review by other Councils from which details of best practice can be obtained.
3. New legislation or guidance expected.
4. **NB:** Before suggesting that a review should not be included in the work programme the following should be considered:-

Could consideration of this issue 'add value' without causing unnecessary duplication, for instance by:

- i) Looking at this issue in conjunction with another group,
- ii) Through appropriate timing of the topic review,
- iii) Through considering another group's findings rather than duplicating the same/or similar activity.