

By: Leader of the Council  
To: Cabinet -14 January 2008  
Subject: **MONITORING OF THE OUTCOMES OF SELECT COMMITTEE  
TOPIC REVIEWS 2001 - 2007**  
Classification: Unrestricted

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## **Introduction**

1. In the summer of 2007 a questionnaire which was circulated to all Members of the existing Policy Overview Committees on the effectiveness of the Policy Overview Committees. The outcomes of this questionnaire were reported to the County Council on 18 October 2007. One of the issues which was raised in debate at the Council meeting was the need for a comprehensive report on the Select Committee recommendations for each of the reports and topic reviews which have been undertaken since 2001.

## **Rules applying to Select Committee Topic Reviews**

2. (1) Appendix 1 sets out extracts from the County Council's Constitution applying to Select Committees including the process for monitoring the outcomes arising from the Select Committee Topic Review process.

(2) Attention is drawn to the paragraphs relating to Review Reports in Appendix 1 (paragraphs 5.8 – 5.14)

(3) Relevant Cabinet Members and Managing Directors (depending on the subject of the Topic Review) are invited to comment at the start, middle and end of the review.

(4) Cabinet Members and Managing Directors are also invited to contribute to the Topic Review Proposal Form (see Appendix 2) which the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee uses to determine the Topic Review programme.

## **Monitoring of Select Committee Recommendations**

3. (1) In March 2006 the County Council agreed to a formal procedure whereby:-

(a) Select Committee recommendations require an action plan to be prepared within three months and for this action plan to be made available to the host Policy Overview Committee; and

(b) for the Select Committee to be reconvened to monitor the recommendations one year on after the endorsement of the Select Committee report by the Cabinet. Appendix 1 sets out the monitoring process.

(2) The Overview and Scrutiny function continues to evolve and develop as does the Topic Review process. The Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee is

continuing to explore how the effectiveness of the process can be improved so that the outcomes and recommendations of the Select Committee add value to the residents of Kent.

### **Impact and Outcomes of the Select Committee Process**

4. (1) Select Committees are seen as one of the successes of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny. Members who have served on a Select Committee often comment that this is a rewarding process. This was borne out by the responses to the questionnaire on the effectiveness of the Policy Overview Committees.

(2) The Cabinet acknowledges that the Select Committee Topic Reviews have added value and made a significant impact and contribution to targets set out in Towards 2010 (formerly the Next Four Years) and a number of the County Council's Policy Framework documents.

(3) It is worth recording that this is not a new phenomenon. Select Committees have been achieving successful outcomes since the inception of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Government. Here are a few of the highlights:-

#### **Looked After Children - 2001**

**This report raised the profile of Looked After Children within Kent and the need to improve outcomes and services for this group of children. Recommendations from the review have been progressed and further developed in subsequent work, the most significant of which are:-**

- (a) the Looked After Children s52 Action Plan;**
- (b) the Looked After Children Review 2006, and**
- (c) the Kent Pledge.**

#### **Pattern of the School Year - 2002**

**The Select Committee recommended that Kent adopts a six-term year (or six half terms). The County Council adopted the six half terms and the fixed Easter break in 2005.**

#### **Financing of the Health Economy – 2003.**

**This piece of work has provided a foundation stone for the engagement of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Health Organisations within the Kent and Medway Health Economy.**

#### **Sport in Schools - 2005**

- The Select Committee recommended the development of school sport partnerships. Following this recommendation, 13 school partnerships were established and through the revenue funding associated with these partnerships approximately £3m of further funding has been generated for PE and school sport per annum.
- Another recommendation arising from this review related to increasing the variety of activities on school sites outside of school hours. The outcome achieved is that the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funding of £500k over 3 years was allocated to the Sports Development Unit in 2005 to support sports activities on school sites out of school hours. This funding was utilised in several ways to develop school sport. In the first year 72 programmes of activity were offered funding totalling approximately £45k through a grants programme; £39k was provided to the 13 School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) to enhance their out of school hours learning opportunities. Kent's School Sports Council was allocated £16k to support and develop the 22 School Sport Associations in its membership and £45k was provided for 9 primary schools to enhance their playground facilities.

#### **Tackling Obesity 2006**

- the recommendations of this report was that KCC's Public Health Department should produce a detailed obesity strategy for the whole of Kent in collaboration with partners and stakeholders as soon as possible following the reorganisation of the NHS in Kent and Medway. "Live Life to the Full" – a Public Health Strategy for Kent was agreed by the County Council on 6 September 2007 and includes a section relating to obesity.
- further recommendations from the Select Committee report on tackling obesity was that the County Council's NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee should initiate a research programme in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University's Department of Sports, Science, Tourism and Leisure to evaluate the effectiveness of brief interventions in primary care in tackling obesity. This should include evaluation of giving patients pedometers, referral to leisure centres, and referral to health walks. Discussions with Canterbury Christ Church University resulted in a proposal for a study of short term interventions being accepted which will start in the early part of 2008. Funding towards this has been obtained from the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

#### **Home to School Transport 2006**

A recommendation contained within this report was to explore the possibility of becoming a Pathfinder authority by providing all students aged 11-16 years, and living in a selected area of Kent, with an annual bus pass in order to

**evaluate bus usage and consequent reduction in car use.**

**The pilot for Kent County Council's "Freedom Pass" started in June 2007 and will run until August 2008 for all 11-16 year olds in Canterbury, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.**

### **Climate Change 2006**

**One of the recommendations related to an explicit corporate acceptance of climate change and how human activity contributes to it, and to clarify political and managerial leadership and accountability on climate change within KCC. Significant highlights from these two recommendations are:-**

- **that the Council approved the first set of actions in response to the Select Committee;**
- **the Chief Executive communicated to all staff and has taken on the climate change champion role;**
- **a Cabinet working group on climate change has been established to oversee implementation of the actions;**
- **a project manager was recruited and is in post within the Chief Executive's department (jointly funded from all Directorates);**
- **Director-level leads have been identified to champion action on each of the three work streams;**
- **lead officers have been identifying each action within each work stream with regular reports to the project manager;**
- **additional guidance in place where needed, e.g. working groups reporting into KCC Environment Board;**
- **activity budget jointly funded from all Directorates secure for 2007/08;**
- **approach to Corporate Communications on climate change agreed and in progress, e.g. KNet;**
- **KCC emissions reductions embedded in corporate environmental performance and ISO 14001 delivery with continued improvements in baseline data;**
- **revised KCC Environment Policy, including carbon emissions agreed by Cabinet in December 2007;**
- **the 2008/09 business planning template includes issues for climate change mitigation and adaptation;**
- **revised Cabinet report template includes implications for climate change; and**
- **relevant Towards 2010 targets and indicators now agreed.**

### **Personal, Social, Health, Education (PSHE) – 2007**

**An advisory group comprising Members who served on the Select Committee, including the Chairman and other colleagues has been established to take forwards the actions and recommendations arising from the PSHE Children's Health.**

## **Flood Risk 2007**

**A special County Council meeting has been arranged for 13 March 2008 following Cabinet's consideration of the Select Committee report on Flood Risk.**

## **Recommendations**

5. Cabinet is asked to:-

- (a) note the report and support the ongoing development of the Select Committee Topic Review process which has achieved excellent outcomes for the County Council and the residents of Kent; and
- (b) request the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee to monitor the outcomes of Topic Review reports published prior to the formal adoption of a monitoring process in March 2006 on a systematic basis.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Extracts from the County Council's Constitution on the Select Committee Topic Review Process**

#### Appendix 4 – Part 5 - Rules applying to Select Committees

#### **TOPIC REVIEW PLANS**

5.1 The Topic Review Programme will normally be set out for the year in March to coincide with the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan. This will be determined by Policy Overview Co-Ordinating Committee and reported to the County Council. In setting out the programme, the Policy Overview Co-Ordinating Committee will be mindful of the resources and officer and Member time required to implement it.

5.2 Topic Reviews will not commence before approval by the relevant Policy Overview Committee of a detailed Review Plan covering:

(1) the terms of reference of the review, including the general nature of the expected outcomes.

(2) the names of any co-opted person from outside the Council to serve on the Select Committee (such co-opted Members will not have a vote)

(3) the staff and other resources required to deliver the review including, if required, the ability to appoint an adviser to the Select Committee

(4) an approximate timetable of meetings and final reporting date (normally within 4 months of the review commencing)

(5) the main witnesses and information sources expected to be involved in the review.

#### **MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

5.3 Select Committees shall ensure that:

(1) dates and arrangements for witnesses to attend their meetings (or otherwise give evidence to Committee members) are agreed with witnesses in advance

(2) advance notice is given to witnesses of the areas to be covered in questioning

(3) information is, wherever possible, distributed to the Committee Members in writing before the witness attends.

## **QUESTIONING**

5.4 Members should endeavour not to request detailed information from officers at Select Committee meetings unless they have given prior notice through the Clerk. If, in the course of question and answer at a meeting, it becomes apparent that further information would be useful, the officer being questioned may be required to submit it in writing to the Committee Members through the Clerk.

5.5 In the course of questioning at meetings, officers other than the Chief Executive and Directors may decline to give information or respond to questions on the ground that it is more appropriate that the question be directed to the Chief Executive or relevant Director. Officers may not otherwise decline to provide information except under conditions advised by the Standards Committee.

5.6 Cabinet Members, officers and other witnesses may decline to answer questions in an open session of a Committee on the grounds that the answer might disclose information that would be exempt or confidential as defined in the Access to Information Procedure Rules. In that event, the Committee may resolve to exclude the media and public in order that the question may be answered in private session.

5.7 The Clerk shall electronically record meetings of a Select Committee unless the Select Committee decides it is inappropriate or raises objection. A written summary of evidence given at Select Committee meetings will be prepared by the Clerk and agreed with the witness prior to its publication.

## **REVIEW REPORTS**

5.8 During Topic Reviews, Select Committees shall ensure that relevant Cabinet Members and Directors are kept informed of the progress of the review and have full opportunity to comment and inform the deliberations of the Committee.

5.9 Select Committees shall ensure that relevant Directors are consulted on any statistics, data and information which are to be included in their reports or on which they intend to base conclusions. The report should include all such data and information or state where it is available to Members

5.10 Reports shall include all summaries of evidence given to the Committee during the Topic Review.

5.11 Select Committees may not in their reports criticise or adversely comment on any individual officer by name.

5.12 Once the draft report is prepared with its conclusions and recommendations, the Select Committee must ensure that relevant Cabinet Members and Directors have the opportunity to comment on the draft report before it is published by the relevant Policy Overview Committee.

5.13 The Chairman of the relevant Policy Overview Committee, in discussion with the Leader of the Council, will agree the order of the submission of the report to the Cabinet/Policy Overview Committee/Council/or any other Council Committee.

5.14 The relevant Policy Overview Committee will monitor and review the Executive's response to Select Committee reports.

Appendix 4 - Part 3

**Monitoring the Select Committee Recommendations**

(8) When a Select Committee has produced its report and Cabinet has endorsed its recommendations, it is essential that monitoring takes place in relation to progress with the recommendations.

(9) Three months after Cabinet has endorsed the Select Committee report, the relevant Policy Overview Committee should receive an action plan from officers setting out how they propose to take the recommendations forward.

(10) One year after Cabinet has endorsed the Select Committee report, the Select Committee will be reconvened to receive a report which details progress with each of the recommendations.

(11) The Minutes from this meeting of the Select Committee will be presented to the next meeting of the Policy Overview Committee by the Chairman of the Select Committee for comments and noting.

(12) It is assumed that once this process has been carried out the recommendations become embedded in the work of the Directorate, or an explanation will have been accepted by Members as to why this is not possible. Therefore, in normal circumstances it should be necessary to receive a further report specifically on progress with the recommendations.



**ASSESSMENT OF A SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEW**

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

<b>*Subject of Proposed Review:-</b>
<b>*Reason for the Review:-</b> (see note 1 below)
<b>*Issues to be covered by the Terms of Reference:-</b>
<b>*Scope of the review:-</b>
<b>*Purpose and objectives of the Review:-</b>
<b>Proposer of the review</b>  .....

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 2007/08?**

(see note 2 below)

**How will the review contribute to corporate objectives and priorities?**

**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:-**

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

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

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

**Portfolio Holder's Signature:-**

**Strategic Director's Signature:-**

**Contact Officer:-**

**Date:-**

## 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.