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To: County Council – 13 December 2012

Subject: New Governance Arrangements for Kent County Council – 8 months Review

Summary: This report provides the opportunity for the County Council to review and vote in an interactive session on the new governance arrangements introduced on 1 April 2012.

1. Introduction

(1) The County Council agreed when it approved the new governance arrangements at its March meeting that it would review the operation of the new governance arrangements before the end of the calendar year.

(2) The Council is reminded that the new governance arrangements were designed to:

- (a) streamline the committee infrastructure;
- (b) make the decision making process more transparent and inclusive;
- (c) support Cabinet Members in making more effective and informed decisions;
- (d) provide non executive Members with a greater opportunity to shape the Council's policies and major decisions; and
- (e) have a cost neutral impact on the Members' Allowances Scheme.

2. New Governance Arrangements

(1) Following four cycles of the new Cabinet Committees, the early potential of the new structure is beginning to be realised and the intended outcomes achieved. Agendas for Cabinet Committees are in the main focussing on big strategic issues, both in terms of policy development, forthcoming decisions and performance management of services. However, keeping Members informed of all the developments in what are broad and complex portfolios continues to present a challenge and it is important that Cabinet Committee agendas are not too heavy with information items and minor matters, which could impede the proper consideration of more important strategic issues.

(2) Whilst the new governance arrangements will take time to become fully embedded, significant steps have already been taken to ensure that the transition to the arrangements is operating smoothly. The Democratic Services Transition Manager meets regularly with directorate co-ordinators (who work with report authors

to prepare reports for Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors) on the preparation of reports for the Cabinet Committees. As issues have arisen these have been discussed and learning shared, which has helped in planning the business of the Council and ensuring that the Cabinet Committees have been fully involved.

(3) A new Executive Scheme of Officer Delegation has been implemented which ensures that officers are able to give effect to and implement decisions already authorised by Members, reducing delay and bureaucracy, as well as reducing the risks of acting ultra vires.

(4) The County Council is invited to consider a number of questions around the new governance arrangements by using the interactive voting pads. The results will be displayed on the projector screens in the Council Chamber. This will help to inform the County Council in refining the new governance arrangements. Whilst not exhaustive the questions will include:

- (a) After 4 cycles of the Cabinet Committees do you agree or disagree that the Committees have/or are delivering what they were designed to do?
- (b) Do you believe there has been value in having the opportunity to input on a decision before the decisions is taken?
- (c) Do you believe there has been value in having the opportunity to contribute to police development before polices are agreed?
- (d) Do you believe there has been value in having the opportunity to monitor/review the performance of services delivered?

3. Recommendation

The views expressed by the County Council will help with the continuing development and refinement of the new governance arrangements.

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