

From: Alex King, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Democracy and Partnerships
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To: County Council – 13 December 2012

Subject: Dissolution of the East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides information on the history, remit and recent developments relating to the East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee (EKJAC) which impact upon the East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee (EKJSC) and suggests the dissolution of the EKJSC as a consequence.

Recommendations: Members of the County Council are asked to formally dissolve the East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee, detailed recommendations at paragraph 6.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee (EKJAC) and East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee (EKJSC) were formed in June 2008 as part of a plan to develop shared working across East Kent with the participation of the four district councils and the county council.
- 1.2 The arrangements envisaged that EKJAC would have a strategic role in overseeing the development of ideas and then a management and monitoring role as services became shared. EKJAC has overseen a significant programme of projects, including proposals for sharing revenues and benefits, information technology, customer contact centres, housing management, human resources and waste.
- 1.3 It was necessary on establishing EKJAC to agree a method by which the decisions and actions it made could be monitored, reviewed and scrutinised. This solution was the formation of the EKJSC.
- 1.4 The EKJSC would have non-executive functions of Kent County Council discharged to it and therefore was established by a resolution of the County Council and must be dissolved in the same manner should the Members agree.
- 1.5 In May 2010, a review of the arrangements that had brought about the establishment of both EKJAC and EKJSC was carried out in an attempt to progress the shared work agenda, and put forward recommendations to that end.
- 1.6 However, considerable difficulties have been experienced by EKJAC in fully implementing the recommendations within the 2010 report. In particular, this difficulty has centred on the ability of members of EKJAC to participate in the governance of shared services of which they are not a part. There has continued to exist some reluctance for member authorities who are not engaged

in a particular shared service to have an involvement in its governance. This slowing of progress has been of particular concern to the EKJSC.

- 1.7 As a result of these difficulties, and the stagnation of the partnership work taking place within these parameters, a further report was commissioned, which EKJAC considered at its meeting on 20 June 2012. This report reviewed the suitability of the formal joint committee arrangements to progress the work to date, the need for the committees, and the possible options for its work in the future. The EKJSC also considered the report on 11 July 2012.

2. The need for EKJAC and EKJSC

- 2.1 Over time the relationships between the participating authorities have changed and now the East Kent services for which governance is provided by EKJAC only has three of the five EKJAC members taking part (Canterbury, Dover and Thanet).
- 2.2 Further to this, the strategic oversight that EKJAC is capable of providing for waste issues in the County is not currently live and would not realistically be necessary for some time, possibly 2017.
- 2.3 EKJAC and EKJSC considered these factors alongside others and in particular whether the vision on which the committees had been founded was still relevant to the work of the authorities involved.
- 2.3 Furthermore, the EKJSC was created in order to scrutinise the EKJAC and has done its most valuable work when the proposals for shared services were being fashioned.
- 2.4 It was agreed by EKJAC that it be dissolved in favour of new ways of partnership working. This decision has been taken to each of the member District Councils who have all taken the advice of the committee and chosen to dissolve it.
- 2.5 At Kent County Council the decision to dissolve EKJAC is underway and the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee have considered and endorsed the proposed Cabinet Member decision. When the County Council meets the decision will have been formally taken by the Deputy Leader.
- 2.6 Without EKJAC in place, EKJSC becomes obsolete. Scrutiny can easily and effectively be performed at the point where services are delivered.
- 2.7 It is important to emphasise that the proposed actions in relation to the dissolution of EKJAC and EKJSC relate to the formal committee arrangements only. The discussions between all East Kent Chief Executives and County Representatives at the East Kent Forum, the East Kent Leaders and Chief Executives meetings, the East Kent Regeneration Board and discussions on any potential East Kent district arrangement would be entirely undisturbed.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Having considered the points above on 20 June 2012, EKJAC resolved that the vision under which EKJAC was originally founded had changed to the point that the Committee was no longer the right vehicle to deliver governance and it was agreed that the Joint Committee should be dissolved.
- 3.2 EKJSC considered the report and the decision of the EKJAC at its meeting on 11 July 2012 and concluded that the reasoning of EKJAC was sound and that there was no longer a justifiable need for the EKJSC should the EKJAC cease to exist.
- 3.2 Each authority must take decisions locally to dissolve the Joint Committees formally and these decisions must be taken by the body that originally conferred the powers. The District Councils have already taken these steps.
- 3.3 Having been established through formal decision making procedures and having both executive and non-executive powers delegated to it via Cabinet and Council, a Cabinet Member decision will have been taken by the time the County Council meets to dissolve the EKJAC and a resolution of full Council is needed to dissolve the EKJSC.

4. Financial Implications

None.

5. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

The monitoring, review and improvement of partnerships is crucial to the success of District and County relations and other partnerships. "Partnership working should not exist for its own sake but must provide value and improved outcomes for the residents of Kent" (Bold Steps for Kent). This review, dissolution and eventual replacement with other methods will ensure that that is the case.

6. Recommendations

County Council is asked to agree that the East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee be dissolved with immediate effect

7. Background Documents

None

8. Contact details

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