

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 14 March 2013.

PRESENT: Ms A Hohler (Chairman), Mr H J Craske (Vice-Chairman), Mr R E Brookbank (Substitute for Mr M J Northey), Mr M J Angell, Mr R H Bird, Mr A R Chell, Mrs E Green, Mr A Sandhu, MBE and Mrs C J Waters

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Algar (Business Transformation Programme Manager - Kent Troubled Families), Ms C Anley (Head of Libraries, Registration and Archives), Mr M Burrows (Director of Communications & Engagement), Mr D Crilley (Director of Community Cultural Services), Mrs J Doherty (Policy Manager), Mr R Hallett (Head of Business Intelligence), Mr T Harwood (Senior Emergency Planning Officer), Mr C Hespe (Head of Culture and Sport Group), Ms A Honey (Corporate Director, Customer and Communities), Mr J Pearson (Project Manager), Ms K Phillips (Countryside Partnerships Manager), Ms A Slaven (Director of Service Improvement), Mr S Terry (Emergency Planning Manager), Mr K Tilson (Finance Business Partner - Customer & Communities), Mr D Weiss (Head of Public Private Partnerships and Property Team) and Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **53. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 January 2013**

*(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that, subject to a correction to Min 44 (8) to read 'St James' Palace', the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2013 are approved as a correct record and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

#### **54. Portfolio Holder's and Corporate Director's update**

*(Item A5)*

1. Mr Hill gave an oral update on the following issues:-

- **KCC Budget** – this was considered by the County Council on 14 February. Mr Hill thanked the Directorate's officer team responsible for preparing the budget for their work in achieving a balanced budget while protecting front-line services.
- **Launch of the Communications Strategy on 28 February** – preparation of the Strategy had been a long, hard road, but the Directorate is now in good shape to achieve services for the authority. The launch and accompanying market place exercise on 28 February had been excellent.
- **Opening of the Edenbridge Centre on 6 March** – much work had gone on to address many problems, but this project had now achieved a very good outcome with the opening of the new centre.

2. Ms Honey gave an oral update on the following issues:-

- **Appointment of new provider for drug and alcohol services in East Kent** – Turning Point will commence provision on 1 April 2013, although KCA will continue to provide the contract for services to support young people.
- **Localisation of the Social Fund** – this will go 'live' on 1 April 2013 as the Kent Support and Assistance Service. Support will be in the form of goods and services only, not cash payments.
- **Testing for horse meat** – Kent Trading Standards have so far tested over 40 samples of meat for traces of horse DNA, all of them having produced a negative result. The Food Standards Agency has asked for a third round of testing, of mince and mince-based products.
- **Young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)** – this issue is a priority across the whole County Council, which is working with Job Centres on the Work Ready programme. This aims to build young people's confidence and get them ready to take on Apprenticeships. The success rate so far has been good, and a further update will be made to this Committee later in the year.
- **A Youth Commissioner** will be appointed to work with the new Police and Crime Commissioner, Anne Barnes. The Integrated Youth Service is involved with the young people's panel which will interview and judge candidates. This Committee will be notified of the outcome of the selection process.

3. Mr Hill and Ms Honey responded to comments and questions from the Committee and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) a recent meeting of the Ashford Youth Advisory Group had received a good presentation by the new drug and alcohol service provider, and a further progress report had been requested from them in June or July;
- b) it was requested that all Members be given a briefing on the Social Fund so they can familiarise themselves with how it works and be able to advise their local communities. Ms Honey replied that briefings were planned for the near future;
- c) the new Edenbridge Centre had been visited by a local Member shortly before re-opening and had been described as 'excellent';
- d) Mr Hill's congratulations to the officer team which had prepared the budget were supported;
- e) the appointment of a Youth Commissioner was also supported, as the presence of such a post is particularly needed in areas where problems with drugs are a regular issue at local Members' surgeries. The new Youth Commissioner, once appointed, will be invited to visit such areas; and
- f) Members were reassured that Kent Trading Standards had exceeded the FSA's required level of tests on horse meat. Officers undertook to supply more detail on the testing of mince to a questioner outside the meeting.

4. RESOLVED that the updates, and comments made by Members, be noted.

**55. Proposed changes to library service delivery at Sandgate and Sherwood Libraries - Decision Nos: 13/00017 & 13/00018**

*(Item B1)*

1. Mr Hill introduced the report and reminded the Committee that Sandgate and Sherwood were the first two of a number of libraries for which the responsibility for the day-to-day running of library services will need a formal decision. Ms Anley added that KCC would retain the statutory obligation to monitor service delivery and provide book stock and resources; what will change as a result of the proposed decisions is the delivery of front-line service to customers. She and Mr Pearson responded to comments and questions from the Committee and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) Members were encouraged by the scale and largely positive nature of the responses received to the consultation;
  - b) lack of confidence was expressed that the community-run services at Sherwood would work as well as they would at Sandgate, and that sufficient volunteers would be available. Ms Anley assured Members that, as the Sherwood library was located in the TN2 community centre, she was confident of there being sufficient volunteers available to staff it. Mr Pearson added that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council was fully engaged with the changes, had agreed to extend the library opening hours to match those of the TN2 centre and had already identified volunteers;
  - c) one Member related the experience of a lady trying to access facilities for library users who are hard of hearing and the apparent lack of training that desk staff had been given about these facilities. Ms Anley undertook to look into the issue and act upon the comments made, and assured Members that volunteers would be trained to the same level as front-of-house library staff; and
  - d) the same lady, however, had praised the new Kent History and Library Centre, describing it as 'exemplary'.
2. RESOLVED that the decisions proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Customer Services and Improvement, to delegate the responsibility for the day-to-day running of the library services at Sandgate Library to Sandgate Parish Council, and the day-to-day running of the library services at Sherwood Library to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, be endorsed.

**56. Expansion of the parameters of the Kent Big Society Fund in response to proposals made in the annual report from the Kent Community Foundation to KCC - Decision No 13/00019**

*(Item B2)*

1. Mr Hill introduced the item and explained that a variation to the policy required a formal decision, and the proposed arrangement would lever in additional funds. Ms

Doherty and Mr Hill responded to comments and questions from Members and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) Big Society funding is not currently available to individuals, and KCC is keen to make more people aware of its availability, and to demonstrate active commitment to supporting small and medium enterprises;
- b) the promotion of the KCC's credit union was discussed recently by the Cabinet, and a question about whether or not the union was being adequately promoted was noted;
- c) Members asked to be able to see the Kent Big Society Fund annual report from the Kent Community Foundation. Ms Doherty explained that it is currently only in a draft form but the final version would be reported to this Committee at its June meeting;
- d) concern was expressed that the Fredericks Foundation charge a 5% fee and then an interest rate of 15%, and that this might lead to applicants using this as a 'last ditch' attempt to obtain finance. This sort of applicant is perhaps not the sort that KCC would want to support. Ms Doherty explained that the KCC has no direct control over the lending model and rates charged. Finance is targeted to applicants who cannot access finance elsewhere, who are thus a higher-risk group; and
- e) other Members commented that the short-term, small-scale loans involved suggest that the interest rates referred to are manageable. Surely the lender would not agree a loan if they did not feel the applicant could manage the repayments. In a difficult economic climate, when many small businesses are having trouble securing finance, this source of funding will be an asset.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Customer Services and Improvement, to allow investment of a one-off donation of £130,000 from the Kent Big Society Fund to support the development of a micro-finance hub in Kent, managed by the Fredericks Foundation, be endorsed; and
- b) a report be made to the Committee's next meeting on the final response from the Kent Community Foundation.

**57. The decision is needed to progress with a lease of the site at White Horse Wood. To develop and extend the country park and to provide improved community facilities, achieved through the development of part of the site for woodland burials. Decision No 13/00015**  
(Item B3)

1. Mr Hill and Ms Phillips introduced the report and explained that the proposal would be subject to extensive public consultation and an exhibition. The principles of the leasehold agreement set out in the report would need to be in place before the lessee could continue to the planning application stage in the early summer of 2013

for a woodland burial site, and would be finally signed only if planning permission were granted. Mr Hill and Ms Phillips responded to comments and questions from Members and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) the proposed leasehold agreement brings an income stream to the County Council. Although the percentage of the income from the site that the KCC will take has not yet been negotiated, some level of profit will be locked in;
  - b) positive comments had been received from the local KCC Member, particularly about the public facilities at the site, which will be available for community use; and
  - c) the Committee acknowledged and thanked Ms Phillips for the extensive work and commitment that she had given to the project.
2. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities, Customer Services and Improvement, to agree to the change of use of White Horse Wood Country Park and the development of a 99-year lease of the site to Greenacres Ltd, and to delegate authority to enter into the contract to Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to enable its implementation, be endorsed.

## **58. Customer & Communities Performance Dashboard and Deep Dive on Troubled Families - Year One**

*(Item C1)*

1. Mr Hill and Mr Hallett introduced the dashboard and explained the two changes which had been made to the performance targets since last reporting to the Committee:-

- the requirement that all deaths be registered within five days had been replaced by a requirement that everyone wishing to report a death should be offered an appointment to do so within five days.
- a new performance indicator had been added, to measure satisfaction of users with the KCC website.

Officers responded to comments and questions from Members on the dashboard and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) one Member confirmed that he had indeed been offered an appointment within five days to register a relative's death;
- b) the number of civil wedding ceremonies at KCC premises has increased since November 2012, going against the national trend. Officers undertook to include information in the next report on the number of other ceremonies (eg funerals) taking place, as well as data on the number of church weddings compared to civil ceremonies;
- c) the new performance indicator which measures net satisfaction of users with the KCC website surveys 2% of users, across all areas of KCC services. The survey is worded very carefully so it is anonymous. The

Society of IT Managers has increased KCC's website's star rating from 2 to 4 stars in the last three years;

- d) patterns of use of the library service are changing, with increasing use of virtual 'visits' and e.books, and data on these types of use will be included in future dashboards; and
- e) concern was expressed about reduced contacts with young people, but officers explained that this was not related to the way in which services are commissioned. Youth work activity can be presented district by district in future dashboards so Members can see the patterns in their local areas.

2. Mr Weiss, Mr Algar, Ms Slaven and Ms Honey then introduced the deep dive report on the Kent Troubled Families programme and highlighted the following key points:-

- the programme is part of a national project, targeted at families who have may have some or all of the following identifying characteristics; intergenerational worklessness, involvement in youth crime, anti-social behaviour and children who have more than 3 unauthorised absences from school in any one year. The Programme aims to change the lives of the families and the way in which they are supported.
- 2,560 families have been identified in Kent, and in the first year Kent aimed to work with 1,082 families. 12 Family Intervention Project (FIP) workers have been recruited to work across the county.
- KCC has a strategic lead with 12 locally-based projects.
- KCC works with partners to deliver the Programme, but controls the funding.
- the programme aims to develop a key professional role working with each partner agency to establish a single point of contact for families.
- a maximum of £4,000 of government funding is currently available per family. This is phased within a Payment by Results model and KCC must make the best use of this opportunity.
- the Government is taking a keen interest in Kent's approach to the project, and the issue is high on the political agenda.

3. The Committee then discussed the Troubled Families programme at some length. Officers responded to comments and questions from Members and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) in the first year most of the funding has been paid to KCC from the Department for Communities and Local Government as upfront 'attachment fee funding', reflecting the national formula;
- b) concern was expressed that a three year project was not long enough. Progress made must be sustainable in the longer term, and must not stop when the money stops. Families must demonstrate the required outcomes before full government funding can be received. Focussed, intensive short-term intervention can break the cycle of long-term dependency and drift. Families will continue to be tracked at the end of their involvement with the programme;

- c) families who have benefitted from the programme could act as role models and mentors to other families. This may be more acceptable to future families than the intervention of a professional, eg a social worker. Dartford Borough Council has proposed a mentoring scheme, which was commended by a Dartford Member;
- d) the establishment of a key worker role was welcomed, as the relationship between the key contact person and a family is vital to the success of the programme. Four Job Centre Plus officers have also been seconded to Troubled Families teams;
- e) the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority is keen to be involved and have a key role in making contact with families by visiting homes to check fire safety;
- f) some families with long-standing problems have built up hostility to intervention, often over many years, and the programme seeks to inspire behavioural change for the community as well as the family itself;
- g) debt is a major problem for many of the families who will be helped by the programme, and the impact of the new welfare reforms may result in worsening financial pressures. Addressing debt is a major part of the programme. It brings an opportunity to support families to maximise their income by ensuring that they are receiving the correct level of benefits to which they are entitled and supporting families to return to work where possible;
- h) in the first year, the Troubled Families team used database information to identify families and checked these records with partner agencies. In year two, the team is working with partners to seek nominations of families known to agencies;
- i) the programme has already engaged 75% of the year 1 cohort of eligible families identified in Kent. There are different ways of engaging families, e.g. ensuring that the changes required reflect the issues experienced by the family and are agreed with the family. New opportunities can be presented via sport activity and work training, and those who do not seek involvement immediately after initial contact may seek contact later. The programme should encourage their involvement by offering them something they want, e.g. help and advice with debt;
- j) concern was expressed about the involvement of Community Safety Partnerships, as in some areas their practice is to ring the police. Kent Police are committed to the programme, with engagement at different levels, and officers undertook to advise the questioner about this engagement;
- k) support for issues relating to domestic abuse can be built into the programme, where this is identified as a key issue. The approach taken in each area will be tailored to address the issues which prevail in that area. If domestic abuse is identified, a business case can be made for more financial support to be built in to address it. The programme will work with

victims and perpetrators, and seek to get the latter into a support programme without the need for a Court Order. Business cases are built and judged at a local level; and

- l) the programme and its progress were warmly welcomed as a challenge but also a major opportunity to change the culture of, and approach to, family support, and its holistic approach was praised.

4. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the performance dashboard be noted, and the next report include the number of funerals and other ceremonies taking place (to balance data on wedding ceremonies), and data on the number of church weddings compared to civil ceremonies;
- b) in the meantime, Members be advised of the various youth work activities, broken down by electoral division;
- c) the work being done with troubled families be welcomed and supported, and future reports include more detailed feedback, broken down by district, and anonymised example case studies; and
- d) in the meantime, Members be advised of the police involvement in the Troubled Families initiative, and the range of engagement possible.

**59. Customer & Communities Directorate & Portfolio Financial Monitoring 2012/13**  
(Item C2)

- 1. Mr Tilson introduced the report and explained that the outturn presented to the Committee was in relation to the most recent forecast of the expenditure for the year to March 2013, based on actual costs incurred as at the end of Quarter 3, ie the end of December. The significant changes to the monitoring since the last meeting were summarised and Mr Tilson referred to the detailed explanations within the report.
- 2. RESOLVED that the revenue and capital forecast variances from budget for 2012/13 for the Customer & Communities Portfolio, based on the third quarter's full monitoring report to Cabinet, be noted.

**60. Kent County Council Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Plan**  
(Item D1)

- 1. Mr Hill and Mr Hespe introduced the report and emphasised the need to maintain momentum to secure the Olympic and Paralympic legacy. The Legacy Plan sets ambitious targets and shares responsibility for its delivery across all service areas of the County Council. A Cross-Directorate Olympic Committee is chaired by Mr Hill. Since publication of the report, section 4 a) i of the plan - 'Key Actions by Sector' – had been amended to read 'place a statutory duty on local authorities to *consider* provision of sport and physical activity services'. The Plan will be web-based; it is not proposed to produce a public-facing paper document.



2. Mr Hespe and Mr Hill responded to comments and questions from Members and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) the clarity of the programme was complimented. Its targets appear achievable, and it is good that its implementation involves the whole County Council;
- b) Kent had provided a record 28 athletes for the Olympics and Paralympics, after providing structures for their development. A condition of the Free Access to National Level Sports People (FANS) initiative, managed by KCC, is that the top sports people agree to make themselves available for local community events at no, or minimal, charge. Mr Hespe undertook to advise one questioner of how to engage a top performer to speak at a youth group meeting;
- c) the Plan is well timed to coincide with an imminent announcement about funding for PE in Primary Schools, and supports the training of Primary School teachers to deliver good quality PE. However, the precise scale and timeframe of government funding for PE is not yet known; and
- d) a view was expressed that more explicit mention of disabled people should be made, and Mr Hespe agreed to look into this.

3. RESOLVED that the Kent County Council Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Plan be welcomed and endorsed, and its implementation be supported.

## **61. The Kent Cultural Strategy** (Item D2)

RESOLVED that the approach being taken by Kent County Council to implement, oversee and monitor the achievement of the Kent Cultural Strategy be acknowledged.

## **62. Ash Dieback** (Item D3)

1. Mr Terry and Mr Harwood introduced the report and explained that ash dieback (*Chalara fraxinea*) has been a major challenge for KCC and its partners for the 4 – 5 months since the start of the outbreak. Emergency Planning is taking a lead role alongside Highways in tackling it. They highlighted key points as follows:-

- Kent's approach has been praised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as an example of good practice.
- Kent has a particular challenge of being the first county in which ash dieback has appeared in the natural environment. Mr Harwood displayed a map showing the extent of confirmed outbreaks across Kent, which were all in the natural environment.
- ash is native to Kent as it grows on chalk soil, and is the most widespread tree in the county.
- ash dieback can affect street trees (of which, there are approximately 20,000 in the county) and trees in the KCC estate, eg on school sites.

- the stability of ash trees is poor, and they can fall quite suddenly once dead.
- an advice leaflet for schools has been published, which has been commended by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Kent Trading Standards have been targeting rogue traders who seek to capitalise on the situation by offering unqualified advice and tree surgery services to householders and landowners. Some trees have a natural resistance to the condition and may not need to be felled.
- trees coming into leaf in the spring will raise the public profile of the issue.

They responded to comments and questions from Members and the following points were highlighted:-

- a) pre-emptive felling is not recommended by DEFRA as some trees are only slightly affected and may be able to survive the outbreak;
- b) the public is advised to be vigilant and to monitor local trees. The Forestry Commission's website and posters and a helpline number are all easy to find. Advisory leaflets will be made more widely available to raise public awareness in spring, and DEFRA will issue more guidance later in March;
- c) KCC is working with landowners as part of its partnership arrangements. The AONB team liaises with landowners while Emergency Planning takes on a command and control role. KCC is also working with Martin Ward, the national lead on ash dieback;
- d) it is not yet quite clear to what extent aerial spread has contributed to the outbreak; it could possibly have entered the country on nursery stock imported from mainland Europe;
- e) it is possible that trees felled in dealing with the outbreak could be used as biomass fuel or in domestic wood burners. In that way, some small benefit could be gained from a bad situation;
- f) an established system run by the Highways teams can identify and contact landowners, but some who are difficult to trace and/or who wish to avoid the effort and expense of clearing infected trees will need to be pursued and compelled to act. KCC has the power to act quickly if a situation is dangerous and recover the costs from the landowner later, although this is both costly and time consuming; and
- g) Kent is at the vanguard of the response to the outbreak and, as it deals with it, will establish best practice which other authorities can then follow.

## 2. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the potential serious consequences that the *Chalara fraxinea* outbreak poses to the environment and economy of Kent be noted;
- b) the KCC approach outlined within the report be endorsed; and

- c) comments made by Members during debate be noted.

### **63. Vote of Thanks**

1. The Cabinet Member reminded Members that this was the last meeting of the Committee before the County Council elections in May. He thanked Members for their work on the Committee and the Chairman for her leadership of it.
2. The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his comments and added her own thanks to him and the Committee Members for their support during her Chairmanship.