

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 6 November 2008.

PRESENT: Mr R A Pascoe (Chairman), Mr R Truelove (Vice-Chairman), Mr M J Angell, Ms S J Carey, Mr D S Daley, Mr M J Harrison, Mr C Hibberd, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr R F Manning, Mr J I Muckle, Mr R J E Parker, Mr R J Parry, Mr A R Poole and Mrs P A V Stockell

ALSO PRESENT: Mr K G Lynes and Mr K A Ferrin, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Barton (Strategic Projects And Business Development Manager), Mrs C Bruce (Interim Director Kent Highway Services), Mr D Cockburn (Executive Director, Strategy, Economic Development & ICT), Dr L Davies (Director, Environment & Waste), Mr R Hallett (Directorate Finance Manager), Mr A Loft (Director Of Resources), Miss E Holliday (Team Leader Natural Environment & Coast), Mr N Sarrafan (County Transport & Development Manager), Mr D Thomas (Business Improvement Manager) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

97. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2008

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

98. Portfolio Holders' Updates

(Item B1)

(1) Mr Ferrin gave an update on the staffing changes and interim arrangements within the Directorate. He specifically explained the role of Mr Hobbs, Director of Highway Services Improvement. The other issues mentioned was that the draft of the third Thames Crossing report had been received and a number of points were being clarified. Members made comments and asked questions which included the following:-

- Mr Ferrin explained that Mr Hobbs' mission was to look at the way that things were done and to recommend a series of improvements to enable them to be carried out better in future. Once there was an agreed direction of travel he would be expected to take things forwards and manage the agreed processes.

- The importance of having officers in place who had direct experience of the service they were responsible for providing. Mr Ferrin gave an assurance that officers in interim roles had appropriate experience.

(2) Mr Lynes, reminded Members that he was now 8 weeks into his new role and gave an update and answered questions from Members on the following issues :-

- Regeneration Strategy (including relationships with District Councils and the impact of the economic downturn).
- Meetings with District Council colleagues and other organisations
- Kent Property Market Annual Review
- Tourism South East awards
- EuroKent
- Rendezvous Site
- Ashford Special Purpose Vehicle

(3) The Committee asked for their thanks to be recorded to officers for their excellent work on the South East Plan and for producing such a strong and robust response.

(4) Officers agreed to supply information on the London Array, Local Strategic Partnerships and the upgrading of Maidstone, and other railway stations in Kent.

(5) RESOLVED That the updates be noted

99. Kent Regeneration Fund

(Item B7)

(1) The Committee received a report presented by Mr Hallett on the 2007-08 Kent Regeneration Fund project progress update and confirmed arrangements for continuation of the fund. Members asked questions and made comments which included the following:-

- In response to a question Dr St Clair Baker undertook to let Members have the evidence for the claim that there had been an increase in income from Tourism (Paragraph 3 (3) refer).
- Regarding whether Fastrack would qualify for funding under the criteria, Mr Lynes agreed that discussions need to be held to see how to take this forward.
- Clarification was given that the funding shown in the report was from the regeneration fund, once a scheme that had been funded from this source was allocated money in the base budget it no longer appeared in this report.

(2) RESOLVED That the Kent Regeneration Fund progress schedules to 31 March 2008 and the realignment of the Kent Regeneration Fund under revised criteria linked to the forthcoming KCC Regeneration Strategy be noted.

100. Financial Monitoring Update 2008/09

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Hallett updated the on the financial position in the current year. The report circulated with the agenda gave a brief summary of the developments on the budget since the 1st quarter financial monitoring that was included in the papers for the September meeting of this Committee.

(2) Members of this committee were invited to note and comment upon this report and a question relating to the proportion of household waste was answered and the figures explained.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted

101. Medium Term Plan 2009-10 TO 2011-12

(Item B3)

(1) The Committee had before it an update report on the Autumn Budget Statement report to Cabinet on 15 September 2008 and any later announcements by Government departments. This was a strategic summary of the service enhancements and savings proposals for the next three years for the functions that the committee overviews.

(2) The Chairman invited the Committee to consider whether they wished to establish an Informal Member Group to look in detail at this report and to report back to the January meeting of the Committee.

(3) RESOLVED that an Informal Member Group (IMG) be established to look in detail at the Environment and Regeneration Directorate's MTP, the Membership of the IMG to be Mr Daley, Mr Hibbard, Mr Manning, Mr Muckle and Mr Parry.

102. Adoption of High Weald and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plans

(Item B4)

(2) Dr Davies presented a paper which provided an overview of the revised AONB Management Plans for the Kent Downs and High Weald. Under the terms of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 (part IV Section 89), Kent County Council and its local authority partners had a statutory duty to act jointly to prepare and review the Management Plans for AONBs.

(3) She explained that was the first review of the AONB Management Plans, which this council adopted in 2004 and strongly reflected the original adopted plan. The statutory deadline for adoption and publication of the Revised AONB Management Plans is April 1st 2009. The plan will be submitted to Cabinet for adoption in December 2008. The formal date for the adoption, by all authorities, of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and High Weald AONB Management Plan

is set at 27th February 2009. In future years it was anticipated that this plan would form part of the Councils Policy Framework.

(4) Member asked a number questions in relation to the plan and its status which were answered by Dr Davies.

(5) The Committee congratulated officers on the hard work that they had put into producing and gaining approval for these plans.

(6) RESOLVED that the Committee support the adoption by Cabinet of first revision of the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and High Weald AONB Management Plan, in fulfilment of its statutory duties under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.

103. Allington Incinerator and Waste - progress report *(Item B5)*

(1) Mrs Barton updated Members in the current situation regarding the Allington Incinerator and the tests being carried out prior to it being taken over by Kent Enviropower. The results of the take over tests would be known shortly but, so far there did not appear to be anything adverse. If the takeover tests were not successful they would be run again, there was no risk for KCC if a delay occurred.

(2) Mr Ferrin undertook to ensure that Members were supplied with the results of the test and, if they were not successful, the timescale for re running them.

(3) RESOLVED that the oral report be noted.

104. Kent Highway Services – Performance Management – Measuring Success *(Item B6)*

(1) Mrs Bruce introduced the report which updated the Committee on how performance was managed in KHS and the current levels of service, circulated was the latest monthly performance report from the Alliance Board. She highlighted priority areas for improvement and invited Members to ask questions and make comments. The issues raised included the following:-

- Clarification was given of the roles of the Alliance Board and their Executive Board and working relationship between them.
- The point was made that this report was more about measuring performance than measuring success,
- Need to change the culture of the service to a “can do” approach.
- In response to a question on the Ashford Depot, Members were assured that all the building blocks for success were in place.
- The issue of street lighting and the contract with EDF was raised.
- Slowness in responding to complaints and a request that Members be kept informed of complaints in their area.

(2) Mrs Bruce stated that she was happy to discuss aspects of the report with Members outside of the meeting.

(3) RESOLVED that the comments made by Members be noted and this item be considered at each meeting of the POC with Members being send this monthly report between meetings.

105. Highway Adoptions – Cold Case Project

(Item B8)

(1) Mr Sarrafan presented a paper provides Members with an overview of the Highway Adoption Cold Case Project. The report set out the background to the project and also contained an Appendix which listed all cases pre 2005. He emphasised the importance of resolving these cases as soon as possible.

(2) It was suggested that in relation to paragraph 5 – adoption – the certificate should be countersigned by the landowner or developer.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

106. Select Committee - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the Select Committees on Passenger Rail Services in Kent and Flood Risk.

(2) Miss Carey, on behalf of the Select Committee on Passenger Rail Services in Kent, asked that their thanks be recorded to officers for their support to the Select Committee on Passenger Rail Services.

(3) RESOLVED that the work of the Select Committee for Future Rail Services and the reconvened Select Committee for Flood Risk be noted.