

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 15 March 2013.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mr R W Bayford, Mr A H T Bowles, Ms S J Carey, Mr G Cowan, Mrs T Dean, Mr M J Jarvis, Mr S C Manion, Mr R J Parry, Mr K H Pugh, Mr L B Ridings, MBE, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr J N Wedgbury

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough and Mr J D Simmonds

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of Human Resources), Mr P Bole (Head of ICT Commissioning), Mr N Brown (Asset Development and Commissioning Manager), Mr M Cheverton (Asset Management Surveyor), Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director of Business Strategy and Support), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager), Mr R Hallett (Head of Business Intelligence), Ms J Hansen (Finance Business Partner BSS), Ms R Spore (Director of Property & Infrastructure Support), Mr D Whittle (Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships) and Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

80. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2013 *(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2013 are correctly recorded and that they be signed as a correct record.

81. Minutes from the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 27 February 2013 *(Item A5)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 27 February 2013 be noted.

82. Business Strategy & Support Performance Dashboard *(Item C1)*

(1) Mr Gough and Mr Hallett introduced the Business Strategy & Support performance dashboard which provided members with progress against targets set in the current financial year's business plans for key performance and activity indicators.

(2) Mr Gough, Mr Hallett and Ms Spore noted comments and answered questions from Members which included the following:

- Ms Spore explained that the customer satisfaction survey referred to in the report was the first one carried out for many years, this was a survey of internal customers and it was intended to expand this to include external customers. Ms Spore outlined the two key concerns raised by the survey which were, firstly the need for there to be an understanding across the organisation of the Corporate Landlord and the related role of Property Services. The other concern was ensuring that projects handed over to Property Services following the restructure were dealt with in a seamless way.
- In response to a question on the number of up-skilling opportunities per £m of contracts - Ms Spore confirmed that there were opportunities for two people.
- In relation to the target of 100% of Data Protection requests completed within 40 calendar days and the percentage achieved last year of 65%, Mr Gough explained that the focus of this team had been on Freedom of Information requests which had for a lot of weeks achieved their target of 100% completed within 20 days. Additional resource was being deployed to improve the performance in relation to Data Protection requests.
- Mr Gough acknowledged that the number of Freedom of Information requests had declined but it was difficult to say whether this was a sustainable downward trend. He confirmed that there had been a focus on improving a number of internal processes to assist with the processing of Freedom of Information requests.
- In response to a question on how the Enterprise Resource Planning programme could assist with improving the percentage of invoices processed within 20 days, Mr Wood explained that there needed to be a balance between the cost of procuring the system to do this and the financial benefit. In relation to the comparison between KCC and other local authorities regarding the speed of paying of invoices, Mr Wood explained that most authorities focused on paying invoices within 30 days so comparisons for 20 day payment were difficult to obtain. It was therefore suggested by a Members that in future the dashboard show the figure for payment within 30 days.

(3) RESOLVED that the comments made by Members on the Business Strategy and Support performance dashboard be noted.

83. Divisional Update - Business Strategy

(Item C2)

(1) Mr Gough, Mr Hallett and Mr Whittle presented a paper which provided an update on key issues and priorities facing the Policy & Strategic Relationships (PSR) team and the Business Intelligence, Performance & Risk (BIPR) team as part of a Business Strategy Division update to the Committee.

(2) Mr Gough, Mr Cockburn, Mr Hallett and Mr Whittle noted comments and answered questions from Members which included the following:

- Mr Whittle stated that although his unit regularly scanned new legislation and especially secondary legislation and flagged up issues to Corporate Management Team and Directorate Management Teams, in some cases due to the complexity of the legislation, for example the Children and Families Bill, it would be necessary to go to an external expert.

- Mr Cockburn explained that the work of these units in relation to performance and risk management underpinned the move away from silo working and into the one organisation ethos. A maturity in the relationship between these units and service Directors had developed and the report contained some good examples of this. Good robust data was being provided but a key role of the unit was to interpret it in terms of the organisation as a whole.
- Mr Whittle pointed out that this year had been the first year that the Business Plans had been taken through the Cabinet Committees before going to Cabinet and he expressed the view that improvements could be made in the level of engagement and feedback from Members. This was something that would be addressed during next year's business planning process.
- Members highlighted the challenge to the Council in responding to the impact of welfare reforms on its services. Mr Whittle stated that the immediate indicators suggested that there would be an increase in demand for the Councils services. There was a need to look at the best way of getting contextual evidence to assist in addressing the impact on services and presenting evidence to Government of the impact.
- Mr Whittle undertook to provide information to Members of the Committee, when available, to clarify whether there was going to be any additional funding available to Local Authorities to cover the impact of the recently announced changes to welfare reforms.
- A Member expressed concern about the possible East to West Kent migration caused by the welfare reforms. Mr Hallett confirmed that work was being carried out to establish baseline figures as quickly as possible, it was intended to report back to Members in June/July and to provide six monthly updates.
- In response to a question, Mr Hallett explained that the "middle office programme" was a pilot project which was looking at how the County Council organised its support services, the integration of services and demand management.

(3) RESOLVED that the comments made by Members on the Divisional update – Business Strategy and the report be noted.

84. Business Strategy and Support Directorate, Commercial Services (Environment, Highways & Waste Portfolio), and Public Health LINK, Local Healthwatch and Health Reform (Families and Social Care Directorate) Financial Monitoring 2012/13

(Item C3)

(1) Ms Hansen introduced an update on the third quarter's full budget monitoring report for 2012/13 which was being reported to Cabinet on 18 March 2013.

(2) Mr Simmonds paid tribute to the Directorates and the way in which they had managed their budgets.

(3) In response to a question on the challenges of generating external work and the impact this had on the budget for Legal Services, Mr Wild explained that due to the financial climate the local government market had contracted, although the number of clients was increasing the value of contracts was smaller. He stated that work was ongoing to open up new client bases in other public sector organisations

and public bodies. He emphasised that the net result for Legal Services was still a healthy return for the County Council.

(4) RESOLVED that the revenue and capital forecast variances from budget for 2012/13 for the Finance and Business Support, Business Strategy Performance and Health Reform, Democracy and Partnerships and Environment, Highways Waste Portfolios based on the third quarter's full monitoring to Cabinet and the subsequent exception report, be noted.

85. Draft Asset Management Strategy - Update

(Item D1)

(1) Mr Gough, Ms Spore and Mr Brown introduce the County Council's draft Asset Management Strategy which aimed to set the high-level strategic framework for managing the County Councils property portfolio effectively over the next 3 years. It would guide future strategic property decisions to ensure that the property portfolio was managed sustainably and efficiently so that it could adapt to remain fit for the future.

(2) Mr Gough, Ms Spore and Mr Brown noted comments and answered questions from Members which included the following:

- In response to a question on whether it would be more cost effective for the County Council to use a property company to manage its assets, Ms Spore explained that one of the issues with using a property company would be the loss of control and flexibility in relation to the asset. There was a tension between the savings that the County Council could potentially make by using this method and the control of assets over time. It would be more difficult to maximise disposals to fund capital if the asset was tied up in a company. It was not a one size fits all. The County Council did partner with property companies when the risk profile showed that it was right to do so in order to drive best value. She stated that she was conscious that when the county council disposed of its property it did so in the right way and there were certain processes that had to be gone through. She stated that with every property that they disposed of they looked at the appropriate costs against the risks and decided upon the best way to dispose of the asset.
- A Member emphasised the importance of working collaboratively across the public sector for the benefit of all tax payers, Mr Gough confirmed that this was the intention.
- Mr Brown undertook to discuss with Mrs Dean outside of the meeting the policy in relation to local groups using KCC premises continuing to benefit from the County Council's VAT free status.
- In relation to questions on energy efficient and environmental impact officers confirmed that they worked with the Director of Planning and Environment to make sure that KCC properties were energy efficient. Reference was also made to KCC Environmental policy. There had also been investment in LED lighting throughout Sessions House and also solar panels had been installed on Invicta House. Officers confirmed that they tapped into external funding for such projects wherever possible.

- Mr Brown undertook to supply members of the Committee with details of the asset collaboration pilots in Sevenoaks and Dartford when this work was finished.
- The Chairman emphasised the importance of keeping local Members informed of major projects within their Electoral Divisions.

(4) RESOLVED That the:

(a) progress to date on the development of the draft Asset Management Strategy be noted

(b) proposed approach, including the indicative timescale and engagement approach be endorsed

(c) that the comments made by Members on the early draft strategy, as part of their pre-scrutiny role to help shape policy development, ahead of the proposed Cabinet Member decision to approve the strategy in May 2013 be noted.

86. Procurement Update and Plans for 2013/14

(Item D2)

(1) Mr Simmonds and Mr Swan presented a report which provided information for the Committee on the progress that had been made in improving procurement and the plans for 2013/14.

(2) Mr Simmonds and Mr Swan noted comments and answered questions from Members which included the following:

- Mr Swan confirmed that he tried to draw value out of contracts and wanted to be seen by contractors as fair and reasonable.
- Mr Swan confirmed that when going out to tender opportunities were maximised for Kent businesses, for example in relation to the coroners transport contract this was tendered in 12 lots on a District basis, and the trade bodies were made aware, this made it more likely that the contracts would go to Kent businesses rather than a national body.
- In relation to contracts management, Mr Swan stated that it did not matter how good a contract was if it was not managed properly, contracts were being made as simple as possible and managers were being training as contract managers as part of Kent Manager.

(3) RESOLVED that the improvements achieved in Procurement be noted and the continued change that will be necessary to deliver better control of procurement and plans for next year be supported.

87. Lean Review of Human Resources

(Item D3)

(1) Mr Gough and Mrs Beer introduced a report which provided background to the lean review of Human Resources, a summary of its outcomes and details of the

actions taken as a result which had been requested at the January meeting of the Committee.

(2) Mr Gough and Mrs Beer noted comments and answered questions from Members which included the following:

- In relation to officers on the Graduate Programme obtaining employment within the County Council before they had completed the two year programme, Mrs Beer explained that it was not the intention to prohibit them from securing a permanent job within the authority during the two year programme. She reassured Members that the Graduates from the programme continued to receive management training and to be involved in broader cross cutting projects after they had secured a permanent job.
- Mrs Beer confirmed that in Learning and Development there had been the amalgamation of three teams under one manager, the team structures had been flattened, including at the administrative level but still allowing for career progression.
- Mrs Beer referred to the improvements that had been made to recording and use of management information relating to training.
- Mrs Beer confirmed that the majority of savings had come from the restructuring of the Learning and Development unit.

(3) RESOLVED that the report on the Lean style review of Human Resources and the comments made by Members be noted.

88. Information and Communication Technology Enhancements

(Item D4)

(1) Mr Bole and Mr Gough introduced a report which advised Members of current technology provision, investment or upgrade programmes and further proposed changes to the council's technical architecture to support the transformation and efficiency programmes shaping future operations.

(2) Mr Bole and Mr Gough noted comments and answered questions from Members which included the following:

- It was noted that a number of Members were using the modern.gov app on ipads/tablets for their meeting papers. Members particularly commended the use of the app on the ipad.
- A Member expressed concern about the proposed IT offer to Members after the Elections, rather than having the option of a Blackberry, a laptop or a tablet/ipad, it was suggested that Members should be able to have all of these or a combination. If it was a question of cost he suggested that maybe Members could have the option of paying for additional equipment out of their Members Allowance.
- Mr Bole undertook to check the new phone contract from Members and confirm with officers what the implications were for Members in relation to logging private/business calls on phone enabled blackberry's.

(3) RESOLVED that the report and comments made by Members be noted.

89. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

90. New Ways of Working (West Kent Key Hub Solution) - Decision no 13/000020 *(Item E1)*

(1) Mr Gough and Ms Spore introduced a report which sought approval to negotiate and agree heads of terms for the acquisition of the freehold or long leasehold interest of the West Kent Key Hub solution for New Ways of Working (formerly Work Place Transformation and New Work Spaces) ,

(2) Ms Spore undertook to provide an answer from Education colleagues to Mrs Dean's question regarding the third primary school on the Kings Hill site and the relationship between this and the extension of the Discovery School.

(3) RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Business Strategy and Support to progress and implement the West Kent Key Hub solution.

91. Last meeting of the Committee

Mr Gough and Mr Simmonds paid tribute to the way in which Mr Hotson had chaired this Cabinet Committee, and prior to that the Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee. They wished him well with his forthcoming Chairmanship of the County Council.