

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 3 April 2014.

PRESENT: Mr R J Parry (Chairman), Mr M Baldock, Mr G Cowan, Mr R H Bird (Substitute for Mrs T Dean), Mr C P D Hoare, Mr P J Homewood (Substitute for Mr E E C Hotson), Mr A J King, MBE, Mr C R Pearman (Substitute for Mr J E Scholes), Mr L B Ridings, MBE, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr R Truelove

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Leeson (Corporate Director Education & Young People Services), Ms S Dunn (Head of Skills and Employability), Mr R Little, Ms A Gilmour (Kent & Medway Domestic Violence Co-ordinator), Mr S Skilton (Area Manager - CS.), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

37. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting
(Item A3)

1. Mr Hoare declared an interest as the Director of a Community Interest Company, Conduit, which sought to get young people into employment.
2. Mr Bird declared an interest as a trustee of the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

38. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2013
(Item A4)

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2013 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

39. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2014
(Item A5)

2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

40. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014
(Item A6)

3. Subject to the inclusion of Mr Latchford in the attendees, RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

41. Update Report on the Domestic Abuse Select Committee

(Item D1)

1. Mr Skilton, Head of Community Safety for Kent and Rescue Fire and Rescue Service and chair of Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group, introduced the report and explained that the 14 recommendations had been discussed by the Scrutiny Committee in 2012. A task and finish group had been set up involving all partners assisted by and chaired by Alison Gilmour, Kent and Medway Domestic Violence Co-ordinator. Of the 14 recommendations 12 were green, 2 were amber and none were red, it was a positive report with recommendations being actions.
2. Ms Gilmour explained that Domestic Violence and Abuse was a multi-agency issue which required the involvement of all partners.
3. Members congratulated officers on their report, in response to a question referring to recommendation 11 and the funding gap Ms Gilmour explained that the services commissioned to deliver domestic abuse specific services, such as for children affected by domestic abuse, were overwhelmed and under-resourced. Charity agencies played a large role in delivering services in schools but this relied on funding which was not sufficient therefore there were gaps.
4. A comment was made about the phrase 'stable and average rate' of domestic abuse, this was noted.
5. With regard to the budget gap this would be provided to Members.
6. A question was raised about the engagement with the gypsy and traveller unit and why rates of 'not known' or unreported levels of one stop shops being helpful were high in some areas. Ms Gilmour explained that work had been undertaken with Gypsy and Traveller units with conferences held, involvement with Traveller Times and the strategy did include a piece of work on which groups were difficult to engage with. In relation to one stop shops this information was reliant on the one stop shops providing it, this was not mandatory, but relationships were good and they would be reminded of why the data was requested.
7. One member referred to the total cost to Kent and Medway services in dealing with the effects of domestic abuse and sexual assault which was £317,125,587. However Members were aware that this figure would be higher due to the social impacts. In response to a Member's query about KCC's contribution to this item Ms Gilmour explained that she was the Kent and Medway Domestic violence co-ordinator and although she was based at Police HQ she was employed by KCC.
8. Two Members queried a briefing due to be held the previous Monday, however the Scrutiny Officer clarified that this briefing was due to be a discussion between the three remaining Domestic Abuse Select Committee Members and that no officers had been invited to the briefing.
9. A query was raised about KCC's website and its links to the Domestic Abuse website. This would be followed up.

10. Mrs Cole, the Domestic Abuse Member Champion explained that she had been in her Champion position since last summer, and she had worked on a programme with schools.

11. A Member commented that the strategy should be applauded; success depended on agencies working together and sharing information.

12. A Member commented that this might be an issue that should be taken up by the relevant Cabinet Committee. This would be followed up and reported back.

13 RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) Thank Ms Gilmour and Mr Skilton for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions and for the excellent work that had been undertaken.
- ii) Welcome the offer to provide further information on the budget gap with commissioned services providing support with domestic abuse.
- iii) Request that the relevant Cabinet Committee receive regular reports back on the issue of Domestic Abuse.

42. Update report on the Apprenticeships Select Committee
(Item D2)

1. The Corporate Director – Education and Young People's Services introduced this item and explained that it was a positive picture for apprenticeships. There has been a slight dip in take up in 2012/13 for 16-18yr olds but this reflected a national trend. Employers were considered to be enthusiastic and keen with good support being offered by the County Council, 150 schools had taken on apprenticeships. The Council's 14-24 strategy provided significant focus with scope for the roll-out of wide ranging apprenticeships becoming more readily available. There was however a need to do more. Support was in place for more vulnerable young people to undertake apprenticeships and there was an expectation that all young people 16-18 would stay in schools or on apprenticeships programmes. There was also a commitment in the troubled families programme to provide additional assistance to vulnerable young people.
2. A member requested a breakdown of the apprenticeship schemes across Kent, it was agreed that this would be provided. It was noted that this could be skewed by a training provider in a locality there could be more apprentices in that area than in others.
3. It was considered difficult to engage with rural businesses and populations with regards to the apprenticeship scheme, a breakdown of rural engagement vs urban engagement was requested, along with an explanation of the steps taken to further engage with the rural businesses. Mr Little explained that the breakdown was to district level, this would be provided. 10-12 engagement events had been held across all the districts to try to engage with harder to reach groups.

4. The majority of the Committee were pleased with report and the improvements in the apprenticeship service offered to young people across Kent, particularly the references to troubled families and vulnerable young people.
5. In response to a question Mr Leeson explained that there were two main reasons why there was a reduction in the takeup of apprenticeship schemes, one was difficulties around training providers no longer being available, the Education Funding Agency (EFA) would not fund places in provider locations which had been judged by Ofsted as inadequate. Another reason was the national shift in the apprenticeship programme; however this was back on track for the future. The funding was subsidised through Government schemes and there was funding available through KCC schemes. It was essential to continue to build strong relationships with employers. There had been changes in national legislation with funding going straight to employers the Council welcomed the stronger involvement in the design of the apprenticeship schemes.
6. One Member commented that, in his opinion, KCC's commitment to apprenticeships was poor, he gave an example from his own division where there had been difficulties with monitoring and other areas. It was proposed that this be discussed with the officers outside of the Scrutiny Committee meeting. Officers were concerned about the example given; it would be followed up, however it was noted that there were a considerable number of contracts which had successfully employed apprentices with a detailed work experience plan.
7. The Council considered it extremely desirable that, where there was the power to award contracts, companies would be expected to employ apprentices across Kent.
8. Members were pleased that some of the recommendations from the Select Committee had been followed at a national level. The Select Committee had heard from BT who used a model which might be useful for Kent to look at further.
9. In response to a question about the quality of advice and guidance provided Mr Leeson explained that Kent was in strong position; however it was understood that not all young people got the most impartial advice but this was improving. An annual careers event had been held at the Kent County Showground which attracted 4000 young people. Schools were increasingly aware that they had to diversify their options and opportunities for young people over 16years. A Member commented that literacy and numeracy skills were important to enable young people to build on the skills needed for their career.
10. With regard to SMEs recruiting apprentices and then not continuing with the schemes, the Council had asked for information on progression rates, it was possible that some companies over recruited and selected the best apprentices to stay on at their companies, and therefore the company did not continue to recruit apprenticeships. It was very difficult to track career

progression in the Kent employment programme, however some work would be undertaken on this.

11. Members were pleased that apprenticeship schemes were being promoted as an alternative to university, it was considered that the Council should have a better idea of where young people were working after completing their apprenticeship scheme. Figures would be provided to Members in relation to KCC's schemes.
12. In relation to the priorities set out in para 6.8 of the Update Report the officer explained that the priorities were those identified across the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It didn't mean that other priorities would not come forward but those in para 6.8 referred to the LEP priorities. This would be reported to the LEP.
13. RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee :
 - i) thank Mr Gough, Mr Leeson, Mrs Dunn and Mr Little for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.
 - ii) welcome the offer of the Corporate Director Education and Young People's Services to provide a breakdown of the apprenticeship schemes across Kent.
 - iii) welcome the offer of the Corporate Director Education and Young People's Services to investigate data relating to Urban vs Rural take-up of apprenticeship schemes.
 - iv) welcome the offer of the Corporate Director Education and Young People's Services to provide information on the career progression of young people who had undertaken an apprenticeship scheme in Kent.