

By: Mr Alex King, Deputy Leader
Mr P Sass – Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership

To: County Council – 30 April 2009

Subject: Monitoring and Outcomes from the Select Committee Topic Review Programme – May 2005-June 2009

Classification: Unrestricted

Introduction

1. (1) Following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2008, the Select Committee process and Topic Review Programme were commended by the review team and as one of the strengths of the County Council's Overview Scrutiny function. The review team commented that: "Task and finish Select Committees and working groups are highly valued by councillors of all parties and have made important contributions to policy."

(2) This mirrored the results of a survey conducted of all Members in 2007.

(3) Both executive and non-executive Members have recognised the benefits of the Select Committee process. From a non-executive point of view it provides the opportunity to look at a topic in depth and the majority of Members have found this process very rewarding as it has provided the opportunity to influence Kent County Council policy. From an executive Member point of view, Select Committee reports have added strength to portfolios and in some cases, have had national standing e.g. Alcohol Misuse.

(4) The quality of Select Committee reports has been recognised both across the county and nationally.

Topic Reviews 2005-2009

2. Appendix 1 to this report shows Select Committees undertaken during the life of this County Council and Appendix 2 summarises recommendations arising from each, together with key actions that have been implemented.

Highlights

3. The County Council should celebrate its achievements, made through the select Committee process. I set out below some of the highlights from reviews conducted over the past few years to demonstrate their importance and the impact they have had on the policy of the County Council and partner organisations.

Home to School Transport – 2006

- The Kent Freedom pass, funded by KCC, was introduced in June 2007 for 11-16 year olds. The cost of the pass is £50 per year, allowing young people to travel on participating buses at any time, including weekends, evenings and school holidays. The scheme has so far been rolled out in a number of districts and has proved highly successful.
- Kent Highway Services' highly successful *Kentcarshare.com* journey matching facility is being developed and expanded to include greater flexibility for journey matching. This will include new 'budi' elements for walking, cycling and taxi trips aimed at improving personal security, knowledge and confidence of local cycle routes and cost sharing opportunities. The new facility will be called *Kentjourneyshare.com* and the scheme currently has 3000 members with 3117 journeys registered. Based on current matches it is estimated that in 2009 the scheme will save:
 - 3,163,283 miles
 - £577,312
 - 1,040.7 metric tonnes of CO2

Climate Change - 2006

Recommendations related to explicit corporate acceptance of climate change and the contribution made by human activity; as well as the clarification of political and managerial leadership and accountability on climate change within KCC. Some significant results from recommendations are:-

- A Project Manager was recruited to the Chief Executive's Department jointly funded from all directorates; the Chief Executive communicated to all staff and took on the climate change champion role; Director-level leads were identified to champion action on each of the three work streams and report to the Project Manager.
- A Cabinet working group on climate change was established to oversee implementation of the actions;
- KCC Environment Policy was revised to include carbon emissions agreed by Cabinet in December 2007; and ISO 14001 has been delivered with continued improvements in baseline data; the 2008/09 Business Planning template includes issues for climate change mitigation and reduction;
- The revised Cabinet report template includes implications for climate change; and relevant Towards 2010 targets and indicators have now been agreed.

Personal Social Health Education (PSHE) – 2007

- An advisory group comprising Members who served on the Select Committee including the Chairman and other colleagues was established to take forward the actions and recommendations arising.
- The Committee recommended that all Kent secondary schools ensure young people have access to websites such as “foryoungpeople”, “RUthinking” and “Frank”. As a result firewalls were lifted in schools and in addition web based resources were promoted to headteachers at their conference.
- The recommended appointment of the new RE and Citizenship Advisor to be responsible and accountable for PSHE in Kent, was secured.
- The Committee urged that key agencies commit and sign up to the Kent Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in an effort to decrease the rate of teenage pregnancy. Partnership working between LCSP Managers, Director of Public Health, CFE and Teenage Pregnancy Board is now established; key agencies are signed up to the KCC PSHE Education Strategy and a directory of local services to support schools in PSHE Education is being developed by all partner agencies.

Flood Risk - 2007

- The Committee recommended that KCC specifically allocate funding to enable road gully cleansing work to go ahead without delay and to enable the condition and capacity of highway drainage systems to be improved - as a result the budget for gully cleansing was increased from £1.8 to £2.8 million.
- Following the Committee’s highlighting of urgent work needed between Jury’s Gap and Camber the Environment Agency brought works forward in advance of strategy approval because of the immediate need. Work is now at the pre-planning design stage.
- The Committee recommended that the Kent Resilience Forum and Severe Weather Group liaise with the Environment Agency to develop a generic flood plan for Kent and this plan is due for ratification and approval by the KRF on the 8th April 2009.

Alcohol Misuse - 2008

- It was recommended that an independent task board be established to carry out a comprehensive needs assessment of alcohol service provision in Kent. As a result, the Kent Action on Alcohol Steering Group was set up and Oxford Public Health Resource Unit was commissioned to complete the assessment.

- An overarching draft Alcohol Strategy for Kent, informed by the needs assessment is now ready for consultation across the county.
- Following the recommendation that there be a hard-hitting health campaign targeted at the young to increase awareness and reduce the damaging effects of alcohol, 'House' has been developed as a multi-agency response across the county and evidence is emerging that young people previously outside treatment services are being identified, supported and where necessary referred on to more structured programmes.
- The Committee recommended that hospitals in Kent improve Accident and Emergency data gathering on injuries resulting from alcohol-related violence. Two pilots are currently being evaluated and a review of outcomes will commence in July 2009 prior to further roll out.

Carers – 2007

- On Carers Rights Day, December 5th 2008, the Kent Carers Emergency Card Scheme was launched to provide all carers with peace of mind when away from the person that they care for. Currently over 300 carers are signed up to the scheme - each will have an emergency plan and be supported by County Duty or the Out of Hours service if they have no friend or relative to step in at short notice, or if their emergency plan fails.
- In 2008 guidance was issued to schools regarding young carers' needs and how to support them. To assist in applying this guidance an additional 20K was allocated to each of the five young carers projects across the county to enable direct work with schools and this has resulted in the identification of more young carers across the county.
- Following the recommendation that a multi agency adult carers strategy be urgently progressed, work has begun to develop the strategy linked to delivery of the National Carers' Strategy, published in June 2008. To take this forward a sub group of the Adult Services Carers Advisory Group has been established with representation from KASS, the voluntary sector, Kent PCTs and carers.

Accessing Democracy - 2008

- A Steering Group has been established to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee;
- A conference at Oakwood House on 28 November 2008 provided an opportunity to explore the empowerment of agencies, and the role of the elected Members.
- The use of Kent TV and extension of webcasting services ensures the public have greater access to the democratic process in the county.

Strengthening of the Select Committee Process

4. (1) As indicated in sub paragraph 1(2) above, when a survey was conducted of all Members who served on a Policy Overview Committee in 2007 the overwhelming response was that Select Committees were extremely useful and enjoyable for non-executive Members, providing the opportunity to look at a subject in depth, influence policy and add value to the County Council, to other organisations and most importantly, benefit the residents of Kent.

(2) During the life of this County Council, a number of initiatives have been taken which are now embedded in the Constitution to strengthen the Select Committee process. This includes:-

- establishing a two year Topic Review Programme;
- costing the recommendations of the Select Committee report before publication;
- agreeing the Terms of Reference with a cross-party group of Members who will serve on the Select Committee well in advance of the first meeting; and
- the protocol for the launching and publicising of Select Committee reports, agreed by the Council on December 2008.

(3) It has become evident from the most recent Topic Reviews of this County Council that successful outcomes of many recommendations rely on partners and stakeholders working together with the County Council to achieve them.

(4) Following the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee's lead, an important part of the process before placing the report of a Select Committee in the public domain was found to be the bringing together of stakeholders in order to gain support for recommendations so that there is shared ownership, and fewer obstacles to implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

5. The County Council is asked to note the report and celebrate the impact and added value that the outcomes of the Select Committee reports provided for Kent residents.

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