

**By:** Mike Hill, Cabinet Member and  
Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

**To:** Communities Policy Overview Committee 7<sup>th</sup> July 2009

**Subject:** Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary** To ask Communities Policy Overview Committee Members to consider Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life – *'Living Later Life to the Full'* and identify the strategic actions to be taken to deliver the aspirations.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Vision for Kent identifies seven key challenges, of which the ageing population is one. Demographic changes in Kent (and most of Western Europe) bring enormous opportunities as well as significant challenges. Older people are often the volunteers, carers, mentors and activists that provide the backbone of communities and Kent will benefit from having proportionately more of these people. In late 2007 Kent County Council ran a series of workshops with older citizens and partners to establish what people thought were the key issues and concerns relating to later life which needed action. This resulted in an embryonic Strategy for Later Life (February 2008) which has been further consulted upon. ASSPOC has taken the lead within the County Council on this work although the issues are far broader than social care and health, encompassing transport, leisure, housing, community safety and community planning and design.
- 1.2 Although KCC has initiated and driven this work, only by working in partnership across organisations in Kent can real improvements be made to the lives of older people. From the start, therefore, the Later Life work has been undertaken in partnership. Within the Kent Partnership, the Public Health Board agreed to take the lead, but recognised that the issues relating to older people cut across all the Kent Partnership Boards.
- 1.3 The attached document (which will continue to evolve) is the result of these discussions and conferences – including the successful conference in the Council Chamber in May last year. It represents the aspirations set out by those older people who contributed to the consultation, and the representatives of partner organisations, as well as KCC Members. On 10<sup>th</sup> February the Kent Partnership endorsed the Policy Framework, subject to it being considered by individual organisations, and asked that reports should be brought back in a year on the action that would be taken to achieve the aspirations set out in the Framework. Cabinet endorsed the Framework on 30<sup>th</sup> March and asked that all the July Policy Overview Committees consider what they will do to deliver this.

## 2. Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life – Living Later Life to the Full

- 2.1 This sets out the strategic priorities and high-level targets that older people themselves, along with KCC and its partners, have identified. It has been a collectively shaped and developed document, focussing on the cross-cutting issues facing older people in order to focus attention on the challenges and opportunities the ageing population brings. Annex 1 summarises the priorities, and the full document is set out in Annex 2.
- 2.2 The Framework looks at how older people want to live their lives, and is deliberately aspirational and positive, emphasising the benefits that the ageing population brings, and promoting a positive image of old age because this was an important message from the consultation. Transport was the biggest concern for those who no longer drove cars. Access to good quality health and social care was very important, but so was access to a wide variety of social and leisure activities. Employment of older people has taken on even more significance since the depth of the recession has become apparent, and will be an essential component of our strategy to respond to the changing age profile of the workforce. Planning for the future – in terms of living healthy lifestyles, financial planning and living in an age-friendly home and community – was another key issue, which applies to people of all ages. The role of older people within families, and the importance of inter-generational activities also came through strongly. Community Safety and protection of more vulnerable older people was another key theme. The issues raised thus cut across all aspects of County Council service delivery and that of our partners.
- 2.3 The Policy Framework document sets out the overarching ambitions that KCC and its partners have in improving the quality of life for older people. It will play an important role in ensuring that there is an ongoing focus on preventative activities that will enable people to live their later lives to the full. Work is now going on across KCC directorates with Districts & Boroughs, Health, Police and Fire & Rescue and the voluntary sector to map out activities already underway which support these priorities and targets. This will enable us to more effectively publicise the examples of excellence already underway, or planned, of which people may not be aware. This process will also enable us to see if there are any gaps in current service provision and decide whether further action should be taken.
- 2.4 The Regeneration Framework has a chapter entitled 'Embracing a Growing and Ageing Population' which identifies a number of actions that KCC wish to promote. These all fall within the strategic framework set out within the Policy Framework for Later Life. The ensuing mapping exercise and action plan will therefore provide a vehicle for taking this element of the Regeneration Framework forwards, and producing a KCC Strategy for Later Life that sits beneath the over-arching Policy Framework.
- 2.5 It is important that by creating a Policy Framework for Later Life we do not establish a new 'silo' for older people but build consideration of older people's interests into the planning of existing services, organisations and partnerships. All aspects of public service and policy development should take account of the interests of older people as well as younger people. It is also important that we prepare younger people for their futures and encourage people to plan for their later lives at a much younger age.

### **3. What is already happening as a result of the Policy Framework?**

- 3.1 The process of consulting on and developing this document has already started to drive changes in how organisations approach older people's issues. It has placed the ageing population higher on different agenda and sparked interesting debate about the challenges and potential solutions. Central to driving this process forward has been the success we have had in engaging with all the Kent Districts, Borough and City Councils as well as Health, Police and Fire and Rescue.
- 3.2 Some of the early successes have included:
- 3.2.1 Raising the profile of Older People's Champions. Regular meetings are now being held between the Older People's Champion (Mike Angell) and representatives of older people (e.g. the chairs of pensioner's forums). Issues important to older people can be formally logged with the Older People's Champion and then passed on to the relevant officers or committee. An Older People's Champion Board is also being established.
  - 3.2.2 Older people's forums are being encouraged to develop in areas where there is currently little take up. In East Kent there is already a strong network of formally constituted forums, and much work is being done in West Kent to set up forums in those areas where they do not already exist.
  - 3.2.3 Districts and KCC representatives are making more connections with one another, which has stimulated some specific, local actions. Some districts have been particularly keen to 'sign-up' to the KCC Policy Framework, and produce their own action plan to sit beneath it to avoid having to produce their own strategy documents. This avoids duplication.
  - 3.2.4 Within KCC at officer level an Older People's Strategic Network has been created to discuss the cross-cutting issues and drive the Policy Framework forwards.
  - 3.2.5 There has been a focus on intergenerational cohesion, with the extended schools service looking to embrace the challenges of social cohesion. A number of interesting projects and approaches are being taken by schools working on community cohesion priorities. A seminar was organised in Brussels for the end of March to discuss the issue of intergenerational cohesion. This is in partnership with the University of Kent and will seek to tap into European funding in this area. A stimulating discussion was also held with the Kent Youth County Council, where younger people proved very interested in the issues of planning for later life and intergenerational cohesion.

#### **4. Connections between the Policy Framework for Later Life and Communities Services**

- 4.1 At Annex 3 is the KCC action plan which maps out actions already underway and identifies aspirations for the future. Similar action plans are being produced by Districts, Health, Police and Fire & Rescue, to evidence how each organisation is supporting the Later Life agenda. The whole KCC action plan is included in Annex 3 to give Members a comprehensive overview, and the action plan elements which Communities is delivering are highlighted.
- 4.2 The action plan demonstrates the important contribution Communities Directorate makes to this agenda, for example through the Handyvan, Wardens, the role that the Library and Adult Education services play in social networking, and the work that the Youth Service undertakes to further mutual understanding between the generations. Whilst economic conditions mean that resources will be particularly limited, the scale of

Communities Directorate's presence in local communities makes us well placed to impact positively on older people's lives in spite of this. The key to successful delivery of the Framework will lie in maximising the impact of our services on older people's lives through innovation, and Members' insights and ideas for how to achieve this are particularly welcome.

- 4.3 Communities POC Members are asked to use the action plan at Annex 3 as a basis for considering whether there are further strategic actions that Communities Directorate should take in order to support the delivery of the priorities set out in Annex 1.

#### **4. Recommendations**

Members of The Communities Policy Overview Committee are asked to:

- (i) Comment on and endorse Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life
- (ii) Give views on strategic actions to be taken to deliver the aspirations set out within the Framework

**Mike Angell**

Older People's Champion  
Ext 4434

**Debra Exall**

Head of Strategic Policy  
Ext 1984

**Ruth Armstrong-Thompson**

Senior Policy Officer Communities  
Ext 4079

**1) To ensure communities are designed to be ‘age proof’, stronger, safer and sustainable, by:**

- Working with developers to make sure that new developments are designed to be sustainable and age-proof.
- Actively tackling housing disrepair and supporting older people in maintaining and adapting their own homes.
- Developing and designing existing communities to be more “age friendly”, in respect both of physical infrastructure and social inclusion
- Helping older people feel safe and secure within their own homes and community
- Preparing for changes in the environment and climate-proofing communities to make them sustainable for the future

**2) To improve transport and accessibility, by:**

- Increasing transport options for older people, including services for those who are disabled or live in rural areas.
- Making people more aware of the transport options already available to them

**3) To enable older people to lead healthier lives and have better access to healthcare, by:**

- Focussing on the prevention of health problems
- Enabling the older people of Kent to participate in regular exercise and live an active life
- Developing better integrated health and social care services
- Assisting people to manage their own health and independence in order to keep living in the community for as long as possible

**4) To support older people’s citizenship, learning and participation in community life, by:**

- Encouraging older people’s participation and inclusion in community activity, raising social capital
- Ensuring older people have a voice and are able to exert their influence over policy making
- Enabling older people to have the opportunity and ability to participate in life-long learning
- Making sure older people in Kent have employment opportunities if they want them.
- Helping older people have access to new technology as well as the ability to use it

**5) To ensure those older people who need support to live independently have choice, control and good quality care, by:**

- Ensuring service provision is based upon a person centred approach
- Working to remove the barriers that can impair the quality of older people’s lives
- Making sure individuals have access to ‘joined up’ information when they need it
- Supporting carers in having a life apart from caring

**6) To encourage people to plan for a secure later life, by:**

- Making older people in Kent more aware of the services and support available including access to financial information and advice.
- Reducing fuel poverty by increasing the take-up of energy saving initiatives and increasing awareness of affordable warmth.
- Improving the economic well-being of older people within Kent

**7) To promote a positive image of later life and dignity and respect for older people, by:**

- Promoting the value of later life and changing attitudes towards older members of society
- Encouraging inter-generational activities and community cohesion