

By: Richard Parry – Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee
Peter Sass – Head of Democratic Services

To: Scrutiny Committee – 9 June 2016

Subject: Proposed establishment of a Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee

Status: Unrestricted

Summary: The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the recommendation to establish a sub-committee to work with the utility sector.

This sub-committee would operate in a similar manner to the Flood Risk Management Committee but with voluntary involvement of partner agencies.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee on 7 July 2015, it was suggested by the Leader that KCC should scrutinise elements of utility provision, including the providers' 5 year plans. Members suggested that utility companies could be invited to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.2 In response to the suggestion that KCC should undertake a scrutiny role in relation to utilities, teams from Growth, Environment & Transport have worked with Democratic Services to develop options for facilitating the desired scrutiny work.
- 1.3 In January 2016, an options paper was presented to a meeting of Cabinet Members by Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services and Katie Stewart, Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement. Cabinet Members endorsed a proposal to develop a Scrutiny Sub-Committee to work with utility providers and regulators with the recommendation that the proposal be presented to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration as the appropriate body.
- 1.4 It was recommended that the proposed sub-committee seek to engage with providers and regulators in a positive manner to build on the successful engagement work already undertaken by the Directorate.
- 1.5 In light of the objective of building positive, long term relationships with utility providers and regulators, it has been recommended that the proposed sub-committee is conducted in the manner of an engagement forum, with an emphasis on partnership working, evidence gathering and information sharing. In doing so, the sub-committee will enable KCC and partners to engage proactively with national regulators and locally with utilities in better aligning utilities to supporting growth.

2. Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee

- 2.1 This report proposes that a sub-committee be established with the Terms of Reference as set out in the **Appendix** to this report.
- 2.2 The proposed title of the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee reflects the recommendation that it should be considered as a partnership board, emphasising the promotion of good working practices and fostering positive relationships across the utility and development landscape.
- 2.3 The sub-committee should make an annual report to the Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 The sub-committee would comprise nine Members; five Conservative, one UKIP, one Labour, one Liberal Democrat and one Independent.
- 2.5 The sub-committee would be supported by the Environment, Planning & Enforcement team based in the Growth, Environment & Transport Directorate, maintaining relevant links with the Growth Infrastructure Framework (GIF) Steering Group.

3. Inaugural meeting of the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee

- 3.1 The proposed date for the inaugural meeting of the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee would be in late June. Should the Scrutiny Committee approve the establishment of this sub-committee it is expected to meet three times a year and more frequently if the need arises.
- 3.2 The initial meeting(s) of the sub-committee would involve a series of briefings for Members on utility and development processes with support provided by the Environment, Planning and Enforcement Team.

4. Recommendation, that:

- 4.1 The Kent Utilities Engagement sub-committee be established with nine Members on the basis of 5 Conservatives, 1 UKIP, 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Independent with membership to be confirmed by the relevant group leaders.
- 4.2 The sub-committee's terms of reference as set out in the attached Appendix be approved.

5. Appendices

Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee – terms of reference

6. Background Papers

[Growth and Infrastructure Framework - 2015](#)

7. Contact details

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