

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 9 November 2016.

PRESENT: Mr R J Parry (Chairman), Mr J E Scholes (Vice-Chairman), Mr H Birkby, Mr D L Brazier (Substitute for Mr L B Ridings, MBE), Mr G Cowan, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr R A Latchford, OBE and Mr J N Wedgbury (Substitute for Mrs P A V Stockell)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M A C Balfour, Mr R W Gough and Mrs J Whittle, Mr P Garten (Parent Governor Representative)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Abbott (Director of Education Planning and Access), Mrs K Stewart (Director of Environment Planning and Enforcement), Mr S Baggs (Energy Manager), Ms S Platts (Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Manager), Mr J Lynch (Head of Democratic Services) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

110. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

111. Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee - 3 months on from County Council Implementation Plan

(Item A6)

1. Mr Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, introduced the item; he thanked the Members of the Select Committee for their valuable contribution and invited discussion on the 3 month progress report.
2. The Cabinet Member spoke briefly about the Government's Green Paper 'Schools that work for everyone', it was considered that Kent was already discussing many of the issues raised in the consultation document.
3. Mr Gough highlighted three key areas within the update report;
 - a. Outreach to families which was vitally important to KCC;
 - b. Admissions - KCC had previously tried to challenge the admission arrangements of the super selective schools in Kent but this had not been successful. KCC was consulting on changes for schools where KCC was the admission authority and KCC was seeking to encourage other schools to consider similar admission arrangements;
 - c. Transport – a new county Transport Policy was being developed and should be available by the end of 2016.

4. Mr Gough welcomed recommendation 13 of the Select Committee's report but further investigation was needed to enable the Council to 'means test' families which were low income but not entitled to Free School Meals.
5. The Green Paper identified working families who were 'just about managing' as a group, if the paper became policy there would be a need for the Government to track what was working for that group. This might provide a way for the Council to deal with this issue although the admissions team was looking at alternative approaches.
6. A Member commented that the report should have been written in the name of the Cabinet Member, the Cabinet Member assured the Member that he had signed off the report and that this had been an oversight.
7. Mrs Whittle, Chairman of the Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee, was invited to comment on the 3 month update report. She explained that a strong partnership between the Primary School Head Teachers and the Local Authority was critical. Questions had been raised about how the pupil premium was being used in schools to support academically able pupils; the Select Committee had had concerns that children from low income families, but who were academically able, were not being put forward for the Kent Test. 600 children who were in receipt of the pupil premium had done well at Key Stage 2 but had not gone on to a selective school. It was essential to look at how children were being supported at primary school, how the brightest children were being stretched and whether more vigorous action was needed by the Head Teachers to support children from poorer backgrounds.
8. Mr Vye, a Member of the Select Committee, was invited to speak to the Scrutiny Committee; he highlighted the promotion of social mobility through all schools.
9. In response to a comment from a Member about the phrase 'we will' within the report Mr Gough confirmed that the work was being undertaken, this was a presentational point and perhaps the service was underselling itself.
10. A Member welcomed the Select Committee update report and the concept of equal opportunities for all children. A strong partnership between the Head Teachers and Kent County Council or the Admission Authority was critical.
11. A Member welcomed the suggestion of the social mobility pack within the progress report. There was also an issue with the lack of aspiration amongst low income parents. The Member asked for confirmation on the status of free schools, were they classed as all ability or still non selective? The Cabinet Member confirmed that free schools were all ability schools.
12. In response to a question about the feedback from the conference held with primary school Head Teachers, the Cabinet Member confirmed that he would circulate the feedback from the primary conference to Members of the Committee.
13. It was considered that the Head Teacher's decisions over which pupils should take the Kent Test were critical, should all children doing well at Key Stage 2 take the Kent Test? The Cabinet Member explained that Buckinghamshire County

Council had trialled an opt in model where all pupils sat a test at the end of primary school to determine whether they were grammar ability, however this had not boosted the numbers of children in the 'free school meals' category obtaining a place at a grammar school.

14. The Cabinet Member commented on the point about aspirations of parents and explained that often it was the case that low income families did not think that a grammar school was the right place for their child. It was important to challenge and seek to overcome this.
15. A Member who was also on the Select Committee explained that if recommendation 13 had not been included within the report it would not have been signed off by the Select Committee, it would be helpful to receive a further progress report setting out progress on recommendation 13.
16. In relation to the packs for parents the cost of this had been raised previously and whether it was done online or via paper copies. The responses to the recommendations had been good and the directorate had taken heed of the concerns raised by the select committee. It was not possible to force the primary Head Teachers to do what they did not want to do. There was hope that the packs for parents could be progressed and a member requested that the Cabinet Committee should monitor the progress of recommendation 13.
17. One of the Parent Governor Representatives raised a point about pupil premium families with low aspirations for their children. There were concerns that the most able children from non-academic families got less support than academic families in the appeals process. It was necessary to encourage the parents in low income families to get the right support.
18. The Cabinet Member was sympathetic to the points made by members of the Committee; there was an aim to ensure that grammar schools took a broad approach to admissions. Mr Gough had concerns about some of the suggestions set out within the green paper, notably those that suggested 'quota' arrangements.
19. Regarding the opt in or opt out system for the Kent Test Mrs Whittle explained that there was no evidence that the opt out system made a difference to the number of free school meal children at grammar schools. The critical question was how to ensure children from poorer backgrounds could access a grammar school place. To close the gap lower income families needed support to enable children to take the Kent test if they were academically able and with the support of their parents.
20. One Member questioned how success would be measured? Mr Gough suggested that it could be measured by looking at the proportions of children doing well at Key Stage 2 from a pupil premium background and compare with those doing equally well from the wider population. There was a 20% differential between the two groups.

RESOLVED that Members of the Scrutiny Committee thank the Cabinet Member, Select Committee Chairman and Officer for attending the meeting and for answering Members' questions. Members acknowledged the completed actions and stated

approach to delivering the Select Committee recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

112. Energy Security Select Committee - 3 months on from County Council Implementation Plan

(Item A5)

1. Mr Wedgbury, Chairman of the Energy Security Select Committee, introduced this item. He explained that good progress had been made and there had been a lot of interest in the work of the Select Committee. He highlighted the progress on recommendation 8, that KCC leads by example through driving further energy saving and energy generation measures across its estate. To date £3million had been invested with more than £10million in energy savings.
2. Mr Baggs, Energy Manager, explained that work had been done to integrate the recommendations from the Select Committee into the Kent Environment Strategy implementation plan. LED lighting had been put into schools and buildings and work had also been done within community groups in Kent. £30,000 had been spent on solar panels in Gravesend which would provide an income of £100,000 over 20 years.
3. A Member asked if LASER was currently purchasing any renewable energy. Mr Baggs explained that his understanding was that there were different options for local authorities to take out but that a briefing note on LASER would be provided.

POST MEETING NOTE: Information on the options available to LASER customers in relation to renewable energy was circulated to members of the committee, via email, on Monday 5 December.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee thank the Cabinet Member, Select Committee Chairman and Officer for attending the Committee and answering Members' questions and note the progress of the Energy Security Select Committee.

113. Progress Report of the Growth and Infrastructure Framework

(Item C1)

1. Mrs Stewart, Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement, thanked Members for the opportunity to discuss the progress of the Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF). The GIF document had been originally published in 2015 and the report gave the Scrutiny Committee an update on progress. Mrs Platts, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Manager, explained that there would be a full refresh of the GIF in 2017. In Spring/Summer 2017 it was hoped that conclusions would be drawn and a draft update of the GIF would be produced.
2. A Member asked about job numbers in Kent and whether the figures were accurate. In Maidstone 18,000 new homes were expected between now and 2031 and the evidence base for job creation was weak with no details or explanation of where jobs would be created. The Member also commented that in paragraph 8 the calculated number of new jobs did not increase between 2015 and 2016. Another Member expanded on the previous point raising the issue of commercial property changing to residential property without the same rigor in the

planning process. Large areas of manufacturing land were unwanted and it was thought that permission would be granted for residential housing in the long term.

3. Mrs Stewart recognised that in the original GIF the commercial employment element was weak; work was underway to better understand commercial growth. KCC was working on this with Locate in Kent which was tasked with bringing in new jobs. Despite not being the planning authority KCC could engage with Government and Districts and identify where opportunities were available.
4. The Cabinet Member explained that it was difficult to dictate jobs, some of the research being done by KCC was because of concerns that offices had been built in the wrong places. Mr Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, and his team were continuing to work to generate jobs in Kent. It was also necessary to ensure that the right rail connections and right roads were available and strong efforts were being made to ensure jobs were created and remained in Kent.
5. Members were concerned that this problem had been discussed for the last decade; it was a historical problem of increased housing and decreased jobs.
6. In response to a question about why the Corporate Director was not present at the Scrutiny Committee meeting the Chairman confirmed that the appropriate officers along with the Cabinet Member had attended the Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the item and answer Members' questions.
7. One Member confirmed that he was pleased that the GIF would in future be produced in house and that the cost was therefore internal only. In response to a query about the funding gap in paragraph 8 of the report, Mrs Stewart confirmed that if the funding gap continued to increase it might be necessary to look elsewhere for funding.
8. A Member agreed that houses must be built but when there was a large funding gap, there was a need to think about communities which involved people and school facilities, for example, to ensure that in 10 years the growth and infrastructure was appropriate for society and communities.
9. In response to a point about funding, the Cabinet Member confirmed that there was an Infrastructure Funding Group with Cabinet Members and senior officers overseeing infrastructure funding, and that an officer co-ordinated KCC's engagement in every major development. The Infrastructure Funding Group helps to find a solution to problems encountered with developments. The Cabinet Member insisted that every effort was being made with Government to ensure that appropriate funding was provided. He agreed with the point about creating communities, this took years to achieve and the design element existed within the GIF with an aim to create vibrant new communities.
10. A Member asked that Action 10 on page 36 be moved up to Action 1 of the GIF Action Plan and more emphasis should be placed on ensuring high quality design.
11. Mrs Stewart explained that a conference would be held with key stakeholders to understand how the County Council could add value to the work of the local planning authorities. KCC wanted to be able to give local planning officers the tools to respond to design in the planning process. The Cabinet Member referred

to Design South East which went into districts to ensure that they were design conscious. Kent Design Guide was found to be too prescriptive; KCC was aiming to establish that good design was worth investing in and to promote good design.

12. In response to a question about schools and health services and whether housing estates would have sufficient services available to them, Mr Balfour explained that the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) had an aim to bring together health and community services. This necessity was already in the GIF but the relevant documents needed to fit together to enable services to understand how each was funded.

13. A Member had concerns that the planning rules regarding free schools were lacking, there was opportunity to control a development site on the GPO site in Maidstone. There were hopes that the aspirations made by the Cabinet Member were repeated when it came to developing that site.

RESOLVED that Members:

- a. thank the Cabinet Member and Officers for attending the meeting and for answering Members' questions.
- b. note the progress of the GIF and request that Officers be mindful of the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee especially the need for appropriate infrastructure and to recognise the importance of Action 10 in the GIF Action Plan.

114. Motion to exclude the press and public
(Item C2)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and 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.

115. Exempt minute from the meeting of the Committee held on 21 September 2016
(Item C3)

RESOLVED that the exempt minute of the meeting held on 21 September 2016 was an accurate record and that it be signed by the Chairman.