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To: County Council – 16 March 2017

Subject: Select Committee Topic Review Update – May 2013 – March 2017

Classification: Unrestricted

Introduction

1. (1) The Select Committees are widely recognised as one of the successes of the Overview and Scrutiny function.

(2) 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 enabled them to influence Kent County Council policy. From an Executive Member point of view, Select Committee reports have added strength to portfolios and provided outcome focused recommendations on key issues.

(3) Select Committees are sub-committees of the Scrutiny Committee, comprising non-executive Members who have had a major influence on national and local policy. The quality of Select Committee reports has been recognised within Kent and beyond.

Topic Reviews 2013-2016

2. (1) There have been five Select Committee topic reviews completed during this period. These are:

- (a) Select Committee on Kent's European Relations, which was chaired by Mr A J King, MBE and submitted its report to County Council on 27 March 2014.
- (b) Select Committee on Commissioning, under the Chairmanship of Mr M Angell, which submitted its report to County Council on 15 May 2014.
- (c) Select Committee on Corporate Parenting, which was chaired by Mrs Z Wiltshire, submitted its report to County Council on 10 December 2015.
- (d) Select Committee on Energy Security, under the Chairmanship of Mr J Wedgbury, which submitted its report to County Council in 19 May 2016.
- (e) Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility, chaired by Mrs J Whittle, which submitted its report to County Council on 14 July 2016.

Monitoring of Select Committee recommendations

3. (1) Set out in the Constitution is an agreed process for monitoring Select Committee recommendations, which has been developed over the past 13 years with the aim of ensuring that the outcomes from the Select Committee are embedded within the work of the Directorates and Portfolios.

(2) In accordance with the agreed process, each of these Select Committees is due to meet or has met to consider in detail the progress made on their recommendations, approximately one year after each report was considered by County Council.

(3) Attached as **Appendix 1** is the updated overview of progress made at the Kent's European Relations Select Committee's one-year-on review.

(4) Attached at **Appendix 2** progress made on the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Commissioning.

(5) **Appendix 3** shows the progress made on each of the recommendations from the Corporate Parenting Select Committee; this was considered by the Scrutiny Committee in March 2016 and the Corporate Parenting Select Committee met on 23 February 2017 to consider progress one year on from the final report being submitted to County Council.

(6) **Appendix 4** shows the implementation plan following the Energy Security Select Committee which was submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on 9 November 2016.

(7) **Appendix 5** sets out the response to the Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility three month update from Fair Access and Improvement.

(8) In all cases it is recommended that consideration is given to ongoing monitoring of these recommendations by the Select Committees, under the oversight of the Scrutiny Committee, on a six monthly or annual basis.

Highlights

4. (1) The County Council should celebrate achievements made through the Select Committee process. Set out below are some highlights from the reviews, which demonstrate their importance and the impact they have had on the policy of the County Council and its partner organisations.

Kent's European Relationship Select Committee

Successful implementation of the Select Committee's recommendations includes the securing to date of some £85 million in EU grant funding for over 25 projects across KCC and Kent (Recommendation 1). Recent project successes include 'CASCADE' (£3.7 million in EU grant) to address dementia care issues in Kent and Medway, and 'Triple A' (KCC grant of £320,000) which is financing domestic energy efficiency measures. A new 'LEADER' rural development programme worth £1.6 million has also been secured for East Kent.

Other achievements include the successful ongoing implementation of three KCC projects worth £800,000 in EU grant to help the county's SMEs with exporting (Recommendation 9), and making KCC's Hardelot Centre financially self-sufficient by reducing expenditure and increasing income (Recommendation 4). European funding for new signalling works at Ashford (Recommendation 10) was secured from the EU's 'Connecting Europe Facility' although this is now to be fully funded through the South East LEP. The project is on schedule to be completed in the 2017-18 financial year.

For full details of progress on the recommendations, see Appendix 1.

Commissioning Select Committee

The recommendations of the Commissioning Select Committee have made an important contribution in the development of the Council's approach to becoming a Strategic Commissioning authority. All of the recommendations have been delivered against however, since the Committee there have been a number of important steps taken to embed a strategic commissioning approach across the Council and progress against the recommendations should be viewed in the context of these.

The Select Committee made particular reference to the contribution of voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers in the delivery of KCC services and potential barriers small and medium sized organisations face when entering the market. Since the Committee, KCC has strengthened its policy framework around the VCS, agreeing the first VCS policy in September 2015. This recognised the evolving relationship with the sector within the context of a commissioning authority, providing clarity in terms of KCC's approach to grant funding and our support to the sector in the future.

In December 2015, the County Council considered and approved a number of proposals in the report *Embedding Strategic Commissioning*. This made a number of recommendations to drive forward strategic commissioning as the new business as usual and in so doing helped to deliver against many of the recommendations of the Select Committee.

More recently, in January 2017 the County Council agreed the proposal to create a single integrated commissioning function and a new post of Strategic Commissioner. The creation of this function will help to further embed much of the progress which has been made over the past few years since the Select Committee report in 2015 and will support the next phase of transition in becoming a Strategic Commissioning Authority.

For full details of progress on the recommendations, see Appendix 2.

Corporate Parenting Select Committee

The Corporate Parenting Select Committee set out 15 recommendations with the overall aim of achieving the following:

- Providing Members with a framework to ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of their statutory responsibilities to the children within KCC's care.
- Ensuring Members are aware of what they need to do and what questions they need to ask of officers in order to ensure KCC is doing the right things as an organisation to support and provide for its children and young people.
- To make sure KCC has the right systems and structures in place to fulfil its corporate parenting duties in the best and most effective way.
- Making certain that feedback from young people informs everything Kent does, from casework to organisational design and delivery.
- Strengthening the work KCC does with its partner agencies to ensure that the needs of Children in Care and care leavers are prioritised.

Since the completion of the Select Committee report, excellent progress has been made in implementing the recommendations. Some of the highlights include the merging of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Corporate Parenting Group to ensure better partnership communication. This work is now further supported through the provision of quarterly Children in Care performance data. As a result, the updated Panel is now better placed to effectively respond to some of the key recommendations of the Select Committee. In response to the issues identified in relation to housing needs for children in care, the 16+ Accommodations Strategy has been developed alongside a detailed commissioning which seeks to ensure suitable accommodation options for young people that would maintain ongoing flexible support at a sustainable cost to the Council.

Additionally, a letter has been sent to the Children's Minister in relation to ensuring responsible authorities are held to account in maintaining the welfare of children in their care. Similarly, there has been co-ordinated lobbying of Central Government in relation to implementing dispersal schemes for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and a Corporate Parenting Handbook is in development. Importantly, Member Training has been updated to reflect the developing Corporate Parenting landscape, with additional briefings organised, the development of E-Learning packages and a planned emphasis for future Member induction after the 2017 County elections.

Further work remains ongoing in relation to the recommendations and full details of progress may be viewed in Appendix 3 - Corporate Parenting Select Committee: Progress to Date. This Appendix was discussed and noted at the Select Committee reconvened meeting on 23 February 2017.

Grammar Schools and Social Mobility Select Committee

Since the publication of the Select Committee report in July 2016, good progress has been made in respect of the focus of the report, which was to redress the under-representation of children from disadvantaged backgrounds within Kent's grammar schools. The recommendations of the Select Committee seek to change this under-representation and

improve social mobility by enabling more children from low income families to access grammar schools across the county.

The report was well received and secured significant media coverage. What the Committee found was cited in Parliamentary debates and elements of the key recommendations were rehearsed in the DfE's recent Schools that Work for Everyone Green Paper.

All Grammar and Primary schools received a copy of the Select Committee report and were encouraged to implement the recommendations. Sound progress in the nine months since the publication of the report has been made and more will be made in the forthcoming year.

In terms of increasing fair access to Grammar schools, a significant proportion (more than 50%) of Grammars in the County have now introduced some form of prioritisation within their admission arrangements for disadvantaged pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium. The Local Authority has drafted a letter which will be sent to the remaining Grammars early in the autumn term, encouraging the remaining schools to follow suit.

In terms of encouraging disadvantaged pupils and parents to apply for a Grammar school place, School Improvement Advisors (SIAs) are monitoring and promoting the engagement of Primary schools to prepare the most academically able children in receipt of the Pupil Premium to take the Kent Test. SIAs are also championing stronger cross-phase links between Primary and Secondary Grammar schools to address any misconceptions they may have and promote the offer Grammar schools can make to disadvantaged children and their parents.

Current and scheduled future progress in respect of the Select Committee's recommendations can be viewed in full at Appendix 5 of this report.

Current Select Committee work programme

5. (1) In June 2016 the Scrutiny Committee agreed its Select Committee work programme. Currently, the Select Committee on Bus Transport and its public subsidy is in its final stages. This Select Committee will present its report to County Council in March 2017.

RECOMMENDATION

6. The County Council is asked to note the report, celebrate the impact and added value that the outcomes of the Select Committee reports provide for Kent residents and agree that further monitoring of the recommendations from these Select Committees be carried out either on a six monthly or annual basis, as considered appropriate by the County Council.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Kent’s European Relationship Select Committee progress report
Appendix 2 – Commissioning Select Committee progress report
Appendix 3 – Corporate Parenting Select Committee progress report
Appendix 4 – Implementation Plan following Energy Security Select Committee
Appendix 5 – Response to the Select Committee on Grammar Schools and Social Mobility
three month update.

Background Documents

[KCC Select Committee reports](#)