

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 8 July 2009.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mr R W Bayford, Mr R B Burgess, Mr B R Cope, Mr R Frayne, Mr M J Northey, Mr M V Snelling, Mrs T Dean, Mr M C Dance (Substitute for Mrs J Law) and Mr R J Parry (Substitute for Mr J E Scholes)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P B Carter, Mr R W Gough, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr R A Marsh and Mr J D Simmonds

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Executive Director, Strategy, Economic Development & ICT), Ms D Exall (Head of Performance & Planning), Mrs S Garton (Head of County Performance and Evaluation Manager), Mr R Hardy (Head of Performance, Improvement and Engagement), Ms J Hill (Performance Manager), Mrs D Mattingly (Corporate Risk & Insurance Manager), Mr G Wild (Director of Law and Governance), Mr A Wood (Head of Financial Management) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

3. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item A2)

RESOLVED that Mrs T Dean be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

4. Minutes of the meetings held on 26 March and 25 June 2009

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 26 March and 25 June 2009 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

5. Dates of Meetings 2009 & 2010

(Item A5)

The Committee noted the dates of its future meetings as follows:-

Friday 25 September 2009
Friday 13 November 2009

Thursday 14 January 2010
Thursday 8 April 2010
Wednesday 7 July 2010
Friday 24 September 2010
Friday 12 November 2010

All meetings will start at 10.00 am and may continue into the afternoon.

6. 2008/09 Final Outturn report *(Item B1)*

(1) Mr Wood and Mrs Hill presented a report which summarised the 2008/09 financial outturn, together with annual operating plan outturn information, for each of the Service Units within the Chief Executive's Department. The report contained financial, key activity and performance outcome information.

(2) Members were invited to ask questions and the comments and responses included the following:-

- In relation to the overspend on roundabout advertising income, which was mainly due to difficulties with District planning rules, it was suggested that, as this income was unlikely to be delivered, it should be taken out of the budget and re-instated at a more appropriate time.
- In relation to income generated by Legal Services, Mr Wild explained that the unit had an annual income target. There was a balance to be achieved between the demands of income generation and impact on the wider market but he believed that there was room for everyone in the market place. He stated that they were looking to expand their areas of operation into other public sector organisations such as the health sector. He commended his staff and was glad that their work had been recognised. He confirmed that Legal Services' turnover was £6.5m, and there were 75 lawyers and 35 support staff.
- Mr Wild explained that a subsidised rate was charged for property transactions to internal clients, which was made possible by external income. Regarding the fees charged to District Councils Mr Wild stated that the fees charged by legal services to District Councils were very competitive. He confirmed that legal services carried out regular benchmarking and he believed that the service represented good value for money.
- Mr Wild confirmed that he had recently recruited new lawyers and specialists for their property law service.
- It was explained that the savings from the Gateways were contained within the Medium Term Plan. Savings had already been achieved in the current year and Mrs Oliver confirmed that in 6 months the "tell us once" service had saved at least £0.25m.
- It was suggested that Children's Centres could be re-badged as "family gateways" which could give an opportunity to share services.
- Regarding the Kent Commitment, it was requested that future reports on outturn include information on work with Districts to achieve savings for both.
- In response to a question Mr Cockburn gave two examples of joint working with District Councils, these were the shared services provision for Human Resources agreed with East Kent Districts and the second was the County Council, District Council and other public services joint network for IT, which

was a shared project that was making savings across the whole of the public sector.

(3) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members be noted.

7. 2009/10 Budget Monitoring Exception report

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Wood introduced the initial budget monitoring exception report for 2009/10 which was to be considered by Cabinet on 13th July 2009.

(2) Members were invited to ask questions and the comments and responses included the following:-

- In relation to the overspend by Democratic Services due to the cost of Education Appeals, it was suggested that the figure in the budget should be increased to reflect the high demand for this service.
- It was noted that at the next meeting the Committee would be asked to establish an Informal Members Group (IMG) to look in detail at the Medium Term Plan. Mr Wood stated that last year this Committees IMG had made a very useful contribution to the budget process and about 50% of its suggestions were incorporated into the Budget.

(3) RESOLVED that the forecast budget variances for the Chief Executive's Department for 2009/10 based on the first exception monitoring report to Cabinet be noted.

8. Data Quality Audit 2007/08

(Item B3)

(1) Mrs Garton explained that Data Quality Audit and associated action plan were presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in March. It was recommended that all Policy Overview Committees also receive the report so that they could have an awareness of issues which had an impact on their areas of work.

(2) Mrs Dean asked that a report on the outcomes from the Informal Member Group on Member Information be submitted to this Committee.

(3) RESOLVED that

(a) the data quality action plan in Appendix 1 of the audit report be noted.

(b) a further report on Data Quality be submitted to the November meeting of the Committee.

9. CED Risk Register

(Item B4)

(1) Mrs Mattingly presented a report on the updated 2009 CED risk register.

(2) Members were invited to ask questions and the comments and responses included the following:-

- There was discussion on the effect of the current economic climate on developer contributions under 106 agreements and the impact on infrastructure works for new developments. It was suggested that the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee should be requested to look at the impact that the re-phasing of developer contributions has had on Local Development Frameworks.
- In relation to CED 18 (Mandated use of central government solutions less efficient than current systems), Mr Cockburn explained that certain technology in the NHS mandated by the Government was in the view of the Countywide Data Network more expensive than a solution that they could have used.
- Mr Burgess would contact Mr Harlock in relation to his question on commercially sensitive information and, if appropriate, share the response with the Members of the Committee.
- Regarding CED 11(a) (Property portfolio not 'fit for purpose'/does not provide adequate platform for KCC service delivery – budget on maintenance not consistent with need, leading to building failure) it was agreed that a note on setting out the additional action points would be circulated to all Members of the Committee. Reference was made to the recent accident at Minister College, which was a foundation school and therefore responsible for its own maintenance. It was stated that following this accident checks had been made on all similar systems.
- It was confirmed that 6 monthly update reports on the risk register would be submitted to this Committee.

(3) RESOLVED that the report and appendix be noted.

10. Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life

(Item B5)

(1) Mr Angell, KCC's Older People's Champion, set out the background to Kent's Policy Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life – '*Living Later Life to the Full*'. He emphasised that issues relating to older people cut across all Directors in the County Council. He highlighted the importance of inter-generational work and the mutual benefits that could come from this. Ms Exall stated that often the focus was on the challenges of an aging population, this document sought to redress the balance by considering the opportunities for older people to continue to make a contribution to their communities by using their expertise, experience and time.

(2) Members were invited to ask questions and the comments and responses included the following:-

- The importance of ensuring Broadband was available to older people to increase opportunities for them was mentioned. Although it was also stated

that, when asked, older people tended to express a preference for receiving written information delivered to their home.

- In relation to intergenerational links it was suggested that each Directorate should be asked to undertake five formal intergenerational projects which could be monitored.
- The importance of giving older people the opportunity to stay in employment was emphasised. Ms Exall stated that currently the emphasis was on getting young people into the work place but that would change over time and there would again need to be an increased focus on older people in the workplace. Another option was flexible working for older people for example mentoring for a few hours a week.
- Mr Burgess gave an example of an intergenerational project in Margate where young and older people shared time on allotments to their mutual benefit.
- The importance of the HandyVan and the “buy with confidence” schemes in making older people feel less vulnerable was mentioned.
- The issue of ensuring that voluntary sector vehicles supported by county council funds were available in evenings and weekends to enable older people to attend events was raised.
- It was important that older people got information about volunteering opportunities in their local area.
- Consideration should be given to new houses being adaptable, for use by the disabled and older people, which would require a change in building regulations.
- As the cost of music lessons for children was prohibitively expensive, it was suggested that older people could share their musical skills with younger people. There was also the issue of older people not being able to afford to learn to play an instrument.
- Crime or the perception of crime was a big issue for older people who did not go out though fear of being a victim of crime.

RESOLVED that the report and comments made by Members be noted and an update report be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

11. Comprehensive Area Assessment - Presentation

(Item B6)

(1) Ms Bryce-Smith, CAA Lead from the Audit Commission gave a presentation on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which included underlying principles of CAA, the CAA framework, a summary of areas of focus for reporting this year and how Policy Overview Committees could contribute to the CAA process.

(2) Mr Hardy explained that officers had been working with all Inspectorates to make sure that they were aware of what KCC already had in place.

(3) Mr Carter stated that his main concern was the subjectivity of the assessment process and sought an assurance that there would be a rigorous moderation process and that before reports were published there was an opportunity to discuss the issues raised.

(4) Members were invited to ask questions and the comments and responses included the following:-

- In response to question on how a partner who was not performing well could impact on the overall score for KCC, Ms Bryce-Smith stated that it would be made clear in the report text if a particular partner was a barrier to success.
- Ms Bryce-Smith confirmed that it would be helpful if Policy Overview Committees looked at some of the CAA areas of focus as part of their work programme. Mr Hardy was asked to write to all Policy Overview Committee Chairmen to encourage them to integrate CAA themes within their Committee business.
- Ms Bryce-Smith confirmed that areas of deprivation were based on the national index of deprivation.
- It was emphasised that this was a good opportunity to raise the profile of partnerships with the residents of Kent to build an understanding to support the CAA.

(5) RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

12. Select Committees - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which set out the process for identifying a future Select Committee topic review work programme.

(2) RESOLVED That the following suggestions from Members be put forward to the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee for possible inclusion in the two year Select Committee work programme:-

- Section 106 contributions
- Employment workforce
- Inter-generational interaction.