

By: John Lynch (Head of Democratic Services)  
To: Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee 12 April 2017  
Subject: Review of progress and areas for improvement  
Classification: Open

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Summary: The Sub-Committee is meeting with representatives of organisations that have previously attended to facilitate a multi-agency discussion to identify areas of good practice, opportunities for improvement and to encourage information sharing.

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Sub-Committee has previously received presentations and updates from the following organisations:
  - Ofwat (water regulator)
  - Southern Water
  - South East Water
  - Technical Development Services (TDS – development consultants)
- 1.2 The Sub-committee has so far focused on gathering information from the relevant organisations to build up an evidence base for consideration of how Kent County Council may best facilitate improvements to the utility sector, keeping in mind the key priorities of developers and utility providers.
- 1.3 To ensure the focus remains on developing improved partnership working, information sharing and positive engagement between organisations and with customers, the Sub-Committee is including all previous attendee organisations in a single round table discussion item. The Sub-Committee will consider the views expressed and recognise elements of best practice that should be highlighted and shared, as well as advising where opportunities for improving the customer experience and information sharing are identified.
- 1.4 In addition to previous attendees, the Sub-Committee is receiving an update from David Latham, KCC Highways Policy and Inspections Manager, to provide additional information about how KCC facilitates relevant works as part of development and utilities activity. Mr Latham will also be providing a national perspective in relation to his work with Highways England. Documents outlining KCC's roadwork management schemes may be found as appendices to this report (Appendices 1 & 2).

- 1.5 A representative from Affinity Water is also attending the Sub-Committee meeting. Affinity Water is the largest water-only supplier in the UK and serves parts of North West London and the Home Counties.

## **2. Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee**

- 2.1 The Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee was established by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 June 2016 and it first met on 27 July 2016. This was an inaugural meeting to allow discussion with Members and Environment, Planning and Enforcement (EPE) department officers regarding the practical remit of the sub-committee and outline plans for working with the key partners in the sector. The sub-committee agreed to attend sector specific training prior to external engagement.

The sub-committee agreed its scope as follows:

- (a) Gathering and scrutinising evidence as to the performance of utilities and other relevant bodies to support current and future growth, gathering information and data from all stakeholders – utility companies, developers, and districts;
  - (b) Identifying the key barriers presented by utilities and other relevant bodies to growth ;
  - (c) Identifying and testing recommendations for overcoming these barriers; and
  - (d) Engaging with national regulators as appropriate to promote these recommendations.
  - (e) Promoting the maintenance and improvement of current infrastructure in the Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework.
- 2.2 The Sub-Committee met informally in November 2016 to receive detailed training on the water sector from EPE staff (Lead Officer – Alan Turner).
- 2.3 The Sub-Committee met on 27 January to receive presentations from Ofwat (Water regulator) and Southern Water. Members had a positive discussion with the external guests, taking reassurance from the improvement in service levels noted by Ofwat and Southern Water’s in engaging in better partnerships with developers and local authorities. Key recommendations from the session relate to KCC promoting and supporting improvement in early strategic collaboration and information sharing between local authorities, developers and the utility sector (supported by Ofwat experience that lack of communication between parties had been the key cause of most disputes).
- 2.4 The Sub-Committee met on 27 February to receive a presentation from Technical & Development Services (TDS - a private development consultancy

firm) and South East Water. TDS provided an overview of some of the challenges facing developers, with consideration of some of the good work being done in partnership with some utility companies, including South East Water. South East Water provided an overview of their activities in Kent and highlighted the positive progress in the industry with the recognition of developers and customers. South East Water also noted the expectation that the new charging scheme, when implemented, would help simplify the development system and allow for better long term planning and information sharing. The Committee resolved that further engagement with Central Government was needed on encouraging appropriate authorities to work together on the range of issues with a co-ordinated approach to improve consistency around the country.

**Recommendations:**

Members are asked to note the discussion with the relevant organisations and consider appropriate recommendations for improved joint working.

*The Committee may require further information be provided by relevant KCC departments and it may request further information from the external bodies.*

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Kent Lane Rental Scheme  
Appendix 2 – How Roadworks are managed (a short guide)

Background Information:

*(Due to focus of the meeting being on updated consideration of all previous discussions and reports, background information for all Sub-Committee meetings has been listed below)*

South East Water website - <http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/>

SEW website – Developer services: <http://www.southeastwater.co.uk/your-water/new-connections>

TDS website - <http://www.t-d-s.com/>

Better Connected: a practical guide to utilities for home builders

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/389772/Better\\_Connected\\_Dec14\\_2.PDF](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389772/Better_Connected_Dec14_2.PDF)

Southern Water – Strategic Statement 2015-40

<https://www.southernwater.co.uk/strategic-direction-statement>