

Additional information for Item B1

By: Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership

To: Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – 23 September 2009

Subject: Draft comments of the Policy Overview Committees in relation to the Potential to Refocus and Restructure the Overview and Scrutiny Function

1. Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee held on 15 September 2009

- a. RESOLVED that Members submit any views and comments to Mr King or Mr Marsh directly.

2. Communities Policy Overview Committee held on 17 September 2009.

Mr King introduced a discussion paper which would be considered by each of the Policy Overview Committees (POCs), the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to a report being submitted to County Council on 15 October 2009.

Members comments and suggestions were invited which included the following (NB some of these comments were put forward by Members later in the meeting when discussing other business but have been included here for ease of reference).

- a. Priority should be given to media training for Members (particularly valuable at a local level where press were in attendance and for promoting Select Committee topic reviews)
- b. The challenges of working with Partnership colleagues to deliver the outcomes of Select Committee topic reviews were highlighted. Some partners were less willing to work with KCC and therefore it was necessary to find effective ways of working.
- c. There was a definite role to play in scrutinising the Police, and other Crime and Disorder partners and the discussions to be held with partners to agree the way that this would operate was noted.
- d. Disappointment was expressed at the apparent lack of a method to identify co-optees.
- e. E-government was acknowledged as a positive way forward in engaging with local people.
- f. There were occasions where projects overlapped with other Directorates and members would like to be privy to more information on the outcomes, with a view to informing local people. An example of this was the Turner Contemporary project, which was regularly discussed at the Communities POC, but members of this Committee would like more information on the work of Regeneration in this respect, so that outcomes could be properly identified.
- g. Mention was made of the quantity of papers circulated with POC agenda and it was questioned whether this was the most effective way of working
- h. RESOLVED that the views expressed by Members as set out above be noted.

3. Joint meeting of the 3 Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committees held on 18 September 2009

Mr King advised that paragraph 6 (1) should be amended to read that the consultation has been "considered at the POCC on 9 September" and sought Members views.

- a. Mr Vye suggested that there may need to be urgent meetings of the POCs.
- b. The agencies we have representatives on need to be scrutinized on what the agencies do
- c. Mr K Smith asked how do we deal with cross cutting issues in the POCs? How do we combine issues affecting KCC and other agencies ie health which affects everything, needs to be written into our agendas. Mr King agreed saying that there needed to be a way of handling cross cutting issues, not just with directorates but national issues, which would help to tackle serious issues.
- d. Dr Wadman said that the Churches valued working with KCC and referred to page 23 paragraph 4a of the report and felt that Cabinet Scrutiny and the calling in process should be kept discrete from the other functions in place.
- e. One of KCC strengths was the relationship between the officers and the Members
- f. Mr Pugh suggested that the Officers from the Borough/District Councils should have more involvement in briefings etc. made by KCC.

4. Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee held on 22 September 2009

- a. I welcome this report and the chance to comment on it. It is very important for Opposition Members to have good information in advance, so they can make informed decisions. I would support more advance information being made available to Members before decisions are taken, so they can be better prepared for their scrutiny role.
- b. (Asked when meeting re two tier working will take place - told week beginning 28 September.) Keen to hear outcomes of this meeting at 15 October CC. Two tier working is a sensitive issue for Borough Councils and for many other bodies as well - Police, Fire, etc
- c. I agree. These are interesting times. Kent is judged on its overall performance so we need to avoid weak links, and all partners need to perform. We scrutinise other bodies - those listed by previous speaker, and services like Job Centre Plus, Probation Service, etc - and we need to help them so together we can achieve a good overall picture

Views noted and will be referred on to contribute to the debate at County Council on 15 October.