

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 31 March 2017.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs Z Wiltshire and Mr M C Dance

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development), Mr M Riley (Economic Development Officer (Expansion East Kent Programme)), Mr J Lynch (Head of Democratic Services) and Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **125. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017**

*(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **126. To receive the Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Select Committee**

*(Item A5)*

1. The Chairman welcomed Mrs Wiltshire, Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Select Committee. Mrs Wiltshire advised the Committee that it had been an honour and privilege to Chair the Select Committee and was pleased to report that the Council had made excellent progress in responding to the key recommendations. She highlighted two areas of work that remained ongoing with expected positive outcomes; more apprentice roles for young people and additional housing for vulnerable young people. Mrs Wiltshire thanked all Members of the Select Committee for their hard work and praised the Officers who supported the development of the Select Committee's report.
2. Members thanked the Select Committee for their excellent report, noting the positive influence it would have in the longer term. Members noted the importance of effective corporate parenting, highlighting it as a key responsibility for Members as well as the Authority as a whole. Members agreed that it was very important that KCC continued to work closely with key partners to ensure young people were supported effectively. A Member commented that it was vital that all new Members were given proper instruction in their role as corporate parents. The Head of Democratic Services provided an assurance that the relevant training was scheduled within the post-election induction program. It was suggested by Members that District Councils should also receive education and guidance on the importance of corporate parenting issues and supporting

vulnerable young people to help sustain a co-operative approach of working in partnership.

3. Mrs Wiltshire thanked the Committee for their support and their positive response and took the opportunity to pay tribute to Mr Robert Brookbank and Mrs Jane Cribbon, who had served as members of the Select Committee before both sadly passed away in 2016.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee thank Mrs Wiltshire for attending on behalf of the Select Committee, that she be congratulated on her Chairmanship; that all Members of the Select Committee and the officers supporting them be thanked for their diligent work and the contributions of Mrs Jane Cribbon and Mr Robert Brookbank be recognised.

### **127. To receive the minutes of the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee (27 July 2016 & 27 January 2017)**

*(Item A6)*

1. The Chairman, who also Chaired the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee, provided a brief overview of the work of the Sub-Committee to support the minutes submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for noting. He explained that the discussions held so far had included a range of water companies, the water regulator and development companies. He commented that the Sub-Committee had already yielded positive results with agreement across the partners that improved communication and joint-working should be priorities. Mr Parry also advised the Committee that the information reviewed so far strongly suggested that Kent was leading the way in this area of engagement with utilities and providers and that there was much good practice across all the relevant bodies that could be shared around the country.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the minutes of the Kent Utilities Engagement Sub-Committee meetings held on 27 July 2016 and 27 January 2017.

### **128. Regional Growth Fund / Kent & Medway Business Fund update**

*(Item C1)*

1. Mr Dance, as Cabinet Member for Economic Development, explained that the report on the changes to the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) and its evolution into the Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF) had been developed to address comments and concerns raised by the Scrutiny Committee previously. Mr Dance advised the Committee that the KMBF sought to bring improvements to the work already done by the RGF, balancing the local focus afforded by having sub-county schemes with the effective corporate governance benefits achieved through centralised management and decision making. He explained that there would be continued funding across the three previous areas and that key local partners would be involved in regular strategic meetings to review the success and efficacy of the funding scheme. Mr Smith, Director of Economic Development, advised the Committee that the KMBF already had available £9.6m of repaid loans for future rounds of applications.
2. Members thanked Mr Dance and the Officers for attending and providing a detailed and useful report. A Member highlighted the RGF and KMBF as a good

example of the Scrutiny Committee's activity leading to positive improvement and that it reflected well on the Economic Development team that they had taken on board the key issues highlighted by the Committee previously and had provided suitable reassurance.

3. Members commented that it should be noted that the RGF had had a significant positive effect across the county and that it was hoped that the KMBF would be able to continue this work effectively.
4. Responding to a Member question, Mr Dance and Mr Smith explained that in addition to core team of Economic Development officers, led by Jacqui Ward, support for the schemes was also provided by various private sector individuals and companies. Mr Smith also noted the support provided by the members of the funding boards who made the relevant decisions using local knowledge and business acumen with the support of professional advisors providing due diligence advice and audit. It was clarified that the Board members do not receive remuneration with the exception of one who receives fees for also acting in a consultant capacity for the scheme. Mr Smith explained that these fees covering the administration costs were now being recovered by way of a small administration charge for each successful application.
5. Responding to Member questions, Mr Smith and Mr Riley (Economic Development Officer) explained that while they had recognised a potential risk of receiving an insufficient number of quality applications for the new funding round, this had not been the case. Mr Riley clarified that 124 pre-applications had been received and of these, 84 had been invited to submit full applications. Only full applications were received which resulted in 18 conditional agreements and 6 were eventually rejected.

RESOLVED that the Committee thank Mr Dance, Barbara Cooper, David Smith and Martyn Riley for attending and answering Members' questions; that the Economic Development department be congratulated on responding comprehensively and positively to comments from the Scrutiny Committee at previous meetings and that the report be noted.

### **129. Scrutiny Overview - 2013 to 2017** *(Item C2)*

1. Mr Cowan, Leader of the Labour Group, commented that the report showed that over the four year period the Committee had managed a heavy programme of work and that this should be seen as a positive for the authority as it demonstrated that their actions had been scrutinised appropriately. He noted that despite initial concerns over the occasionally restrictive approach to scrutiny at KCC, the situation had improved over time with support from the Chairman and that this had allowed for effective scrutiny activity. Mr Cowan expressed thanks to the Chairman on behalf of the Labour Group.
2. Mr Latchford, Leader of the Opposition (UKIP) supported Mr Cowan's comments and added his thanks. Mr Birkby noted, without criticism, that KCC should review its Scrutiny arrangements and consider installing the leader of the opposition as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee after the election. It was noted by other

Members that at County level, it was common practice for the Scrutiny Chairman to be a member of the ruling group.

3. Members agreed that the strength and effectiveness of the Committee had grown over time and that they had made a positive impact on the work of the Council and consequently the lives of the people of Kent.
4. Mr Garten, Parent Governor representative, thanked the Committee for permitting his broad involvement in its deliberations on a range of matters. He commented that KCC should consider allowing parent governor representatives to advise Cabinet Members directly rather than including them as members of the Scrutiny Committee.
5. The Chairman thanked Mr Garten for his contribution to the Committee's work and thanked the entire Committee for their positive remarks at the meeting and, more importantly, for their support and hard work since 2013.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the report on its work in the 2013 / 2017 period; that the former and current Heads of Democratic Services, Peter Sass and John Lynch, be thanked for their support and guidance and that Anna Taylor and Joel Cook be thanked for their hard work supporting the Committee as Research Officers.