

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 21 June 2017.

PRESENT: Mr M Whiting (Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr R H Bird (Substitute for Mr I S Chittenden), Mr A Booth, Mr D Butler, Mr D Farrell, Mr S Holden, Mr A J Hook, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Mr G Lymer, Mr R A Marsh (Substitute for Mr A H T Bowles), Mr J P McInroy (Substitute for Mr A Cook), Mr P J Messenger, Mr A M Ridgers and Mr J Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M C Dance and Mrs S V Hohler

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development), Mrs K Stewart (Director of Environment Planning and Enforcement) and Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

2. Chairman's welcome

The Chairman welcomed new Members who had recently joined the County Council and welcomed all Members to the first meeting of the new Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.

He welcomed the Deputy Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, Mrs S V Hohler, to the meeting in place of Mr P M Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, and welcomed Mr M C Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development.

3. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr A H T Bowles, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr A Cook and Mr H Rayner.

Mr R H Bird was present as a substitute for Mr Chittenden, Mr J McInroy for Mr Cook and Mr R A Marsh for Mr Bowles.

4. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item 3)

Mr J A Kite proposed and Mr G Lymer seconded that Mr S Holden be elected Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet Committee.

There being no other nominations, this was agreed without a vote.

5. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item 4)

Mr D Farrell declared a general interest as an Ashford Borough Councillor, although he had had no involvement in the Ashford District Deal (Agenda item 7).

6. Minutes of the meetings held on 22 March and 25 May 2017

(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings which took place on 22 March and 25 May 2017 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

7. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members

1. Mrs S V Hohler, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, gave a verbal update on the following issues:-

Turner Prize 2019 – It had recently been announced that the Turner Contemporary in Margate would be the host venue for the Turner Prize in 2019.

Turner Contemporary – Visitor numbers for this excellent cultural venue had now reached 370,000 per year, three times as many as had been predicted at the project's inception in 2001. A good range of exhibitions had been hosted there since its opening in 2011. Members who had not already visited the venue were encouraged to do so. The County Council had always supported the development of the gallery, both financially and by Mrs Hohler being a Trustee of its management board.

Kent County Youth Orchestra – 2017 marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of Kent Music and the Kent County Youth Orchestra, which had done much to promote the enjoyment of music in schools.

2. Mr M C Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, gave a verbal update on the following issue:-

Paramount – The London Resort Holding Co Ltd had recently announced its intention to discontinue licensing for the London Paramount Theme Park planned for Swanscombe. Alternative support was being sought via an open forum.

3. RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted.

8. Presentation by Canterbury Christ Church University - Kent businesses and Brexit transition

(Item 6)

Professor Mark Hammond, Visiting Professor of Politics and International Relations, and Professor Amelia Hadfield, Director of the Centre for European Studies, Canterbury Christ Church University, were in attendance for this item at the invitation of the committee.

Professor Mark Hammond and Professor Amelia Hadfield introduced the report which focused primarily on the implications of Brexit for small and medium-sized enterprises, agriculture and policing. It was reported that Helen Whately, Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid-Kent, would be sponsoring the launch of the final report at Westminster on 13th July 2017.

The committee heard that the report was based on data and views from different businesses and organisations across Kent and Medway. The report did not contain personal or substantive views on the referendum result and no judgemental value had been taken from the exercise. Amelia Hadfield informed Members that due to limited financial provisions, the surveys carried out were all that were permitted within the budgetary constraints, thereby allowing a limited view of the possible economic issues that could arise. CCCU had worked hard to maintain the national perspective and Local Kent Imperative. The report would be submitted to the Brexit Department and Brexit Committee.

Amelia Hadfield informed Members that the Government had still to finalise any necessary amendments to the Common Agriculture Policy but the possible removal of subsidies to farmers and restrictions on the free movement of workers had already led to the trial of innovative solutions such as digital farming to reduce reliance of manual labour. Although mechanical farming was in its infancy, pilot projects could be used throughout Kent and Medway to identify ways in which this could be rolled out.

Amelia Hadfield confirmed that the current value of subsidies into Kent was £45m.

The report identified that there had been a 50% drop in agriculture recruitment agencies, Professor Amelia Hadfield confirmed that this was due to a 50% drop in applicants.

The Committee heard that CCCU were unable to quantify the effects on the average family's house-hold food bill following the decisions on the CAP.

A Member said that in order to hold an open and national debate; full, reliable and relevant data must be fed into any research and looked at objectively and without prejudice. Following the decision to leave the European Union, Local Government needed all areas of expertise and opposing sides to produce this objective data for decision makers to utilise.

Mr Smith concluded that the report submitted by CCCU in December 2016 was of great interest to Kent. The MP for Faversham and Mid-Kent who was a Member of the Brexit Committee found the report to be useful to inform discussions in the Parliamentary Committee. The next report would be published in July and would return to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee following its submission to Parliament in the early summer.

9. Ashford District Deal - Review and Refresh

(Item 7)

The committee received a report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development providing both a review of the current District Deal with Ashford Borough Council, as

well as a proposed decision of the Leader of KCC, Mr Paul Carter to refresh the Deal. The review and recommendations for the refreshed Deal were set out in a full report in the Appendix.

Mr Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, introduced the report to members. He welcomed the report and the achievements of the current deal; he had recently attended the Ashford Strategic Board and welcomed the high levels of economic growth that had been reported and the successful work that had been undertaken with Damian Green, the Member of Parliament for Ashford and all tiers of the Local Government.

Katie Stewart, Director of Environment Planning and Enforcement, spoke to the item, and reported the progress that had been made under the existing deal and said that teams had worked together to attract funding to continue to deliver the aims and objectives of the current deal and to add two new strategic projects to the refresh - Conningbrook Park and Newtown Works.

It was RESOLVED that the proposed decision of the Leader to enter into the refreshed deal with Ashford Borough Council be endorsed.

10. Update on Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 - 2021 *(Item 8)*

Mr J Pearson, Interim Head of Service, was in attendance for this item.

The committee received a report summarising the key points from the national Libraries Taskforce strategy document 'Libraries Deliver' and articulating how the Library, Registration & Archive (LRA) service proposes to respond to it.

Mrs S V Hohler emphasised the importance of libraries to communities. The Vision for Libraries was a national document and the County Council had now to make it relevant to Kent. Mrs Hohler said how proud she was of Kent's libraries service, especially the development of the digital playground. Mr Pearson introduced the report and highlighted the key threads of Kent's work to implement the national vision.

RESOLVED that the information set out in the report be noted, the progress made in implementing the vision be welcomed, and further details of plans be reported to a future meeting of the committee.

11. European Funding *(Item 9)*

Mr Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development introduced the report and said that bids would include East Sussex and Essex.

Ron Moyes, Head of International Affairs, said that the Government had confirmed that any projects signed before Britain leaves the EU would continue to be funded. He also discussed the main European programmes that were still accessible, under ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds), there was around £35m available for projects and under the Interreg 2 Seas programme there was £100m available for

applicants. There were 35 projects that had been secured across the country worth around £65m in European grants and that was towards the overall target of £100m for the current programmes. There were concerns around whether the target set was achievable so promoting the programmes was a priority. He also said that opportunities to influence potential UK Domestic Funding for co-operation across the Channel, and an opportunity to devise a more focused and effective domestic co-operation programme under the European interreg programme would be considered.

Mr Moyes said that Kent was the first county in Britain to secure funding under the Interreg Cross Border programme largely as a result of the potential impacts of the channel tunnel on border control and other issues. The programme was jointly run by organisations in Kent and partners in Calais.

A Member requested that officers try to maintain a consistent and jargon-free approach to report writing.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

12. Update on Apprenticeships Reforms *(Item 10)*

Sue Dunn, Head of Skills and Employability, introduced the report and said that the Apprenticeship Reforms had been put in place to allow Employers to be in control of, and have direct access to funding. All apprenticeship standards were developed directly with Employers and any new standards used within the Council had been generated and developed by other public sector bodies. School leavers were able to complete a Level 2 qualification and were given the opportunity to complete higher level apprenticeships if desired. Apprenticeship opportunities in Teaching were in development which would create a new career pathway for young people. Ms Dunn said it was important to recognise the County's success in promoting apprenticeships and maintaining a high place nationally in terms of the work and the number of people engaged. The Skills and Employability team were launching a new campaign working with colleges, training providers and Employers with the intention to interview 1,000 people between by January 2018 and aim to get at least 500 of the 1,000 people into apprenticeships. The main objective was to double the number of apprenticeships in Kent without diminishing the quality of the apprenticeships and to make sure that the apprenticeship opportunities' were in the right locations and offered at appropriate levels.

A Member commented on the current levels of success and said that keeping schools, apprentices and employers informed was a priority.

Ms Dunn said that the Made in Kent campaign had been very successful and that a new website had been created for apprenticeships as well as utilising social media which had had a large impact on promoting the Made In Kent campaign effectively. 2,000 young people had applied for foundation level and higher level apprenticeships through the Made In Kent campaign and 750 apprenticeships were advertised in total.

In response to comments from members, Ms Dunn encouraged promoting the apprenticeships that were available to young people. She also said that there was a particular profile of work for KCC employers and a focused piece of work in schools

to see how schools as employers could contribute to the apprenticeship agenda. Ms Dunn said that the main focus was to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities within the Council at all levels.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

13. Performance Dashboard

(Item 11)

14. Libraries, Registration and Archives performance against the service specification 2016-2017

(Item 12)

Mr J Pearson, Interim Head of Service, was in attendance for this item.

Mrs Cooper introduced the report and explained that the Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) service was an internally-commissioned, completely integrated service which included the registration and home office passport services, which could not be outsourced to any external provider. A decision had been taken in 2015 to keep the services together, and Kent was currently the only county in the UK to have a totally integrated LRA service. The report set out performance against the service specification during 2016/17 and the specification for 2017/18.

Mr Pearson added that the specification included two methods of measuring performance, as key performance indicators (KPIs) recorded figures but could not assess quality. He highlighted key areas of performance, such as customer satisfaction (which was at 95 – 97 % across various parts of the service), and the home library service, which, although receiving good feedback from customers, had not been used by as many people as had been expected and so had not met its target for the year. The registration and wedding services had also both received excellent customer feedback.

Mrs Cooper and Mr Pearson responded to comments and questions from Members, including the following:-

Visitor numbers for the Kent History and Libraries Centre had been lower than those for the former Centre for Kentish Studies at Sessions House, and satisfaction rating was only 86%, as the space at the Kent History and Libraries Centre was smaller than at the Centre for Kentish Studies and work was still going on to develop and improve the new archive service;

- a) in response to a question, Mr Pearson undertook to look into the level of investment in new books at Faversham library;
- b) responding to a comment about how libraries could support an improvement in reading attainment at primary schools, Mr Pearson explained that the School Summer Reading Challenge had been established to counteract the dip in reading over the long school holidays, and Members were encouraged to support this scheme in their local libraries. Schools could be encouraged to visit their local libraries and explore the opportunities there, particularly in the digital area. Mrs Cooper added that work was ongoing to seek to link libraries with children's centres

and combine services to give a 'cradle to grave' service. This could signpost new parents registering a birth to other children's services and projects to encourage early reading. She added that libraries could identify and support local students' needs, for example by offering a homework club, as in some other EU countries;

- c) in response to a question about digitalisation of collections, Mr Pearson explained that Kent needed to secure the permission and agreement of any other party depositing an item before digitalising it to add to Kent's collection, and would charge the other party for the cost of the process;
- d) in response to a question about how older people in sheltered accommodation could be helped to access a library service within their premises, Mr Pearson explained that a range of services were being developed to support such communities, such as supplying a box of books to a residential or nursing home, with the contents of the box being refreshed regularly, and the Home Library Service. However, such services would need to be sufficiently used if they were to be retained and continued. The SELMS scheme allowed libraries to borrow books from each other, to keep their local supply fresh, and could also serve readers requiring books in other languages. Borrowing such books from a larger library already serving a wider and more culturally diverse population could save smaller libraries from having to source and fund their own collections from scratch;
- e) asked what input library staff had been able to have into the development or delivery of the specification, Mr Pearson explained that staff workshops and feedback had been a priority in delivering the national ambition and developing the LRA specification;
- f) in response to a comment about the availability and operation hearing loops and more generally awareness of disability and social inclusion issues, Mr Pearson emphasised that a key point of the LRA service specification was that services should be available to all. The challenge of delivering this was that data for library users, and their satisfaction with the service, was only recorded where there was engagement with the lending service; people who had attended a library to use a computer, for example, would not generate data about their visit. Satisfaction surveys were a key part of developing the service, and work was in hand to improve this area of work. Where feedback had been received disabled service users had recorded very positive comments about how they had been treated and supported when using their local library;
- g) although undertaking an EQIA was a vital part of identifying needs and shaping a service to meet them, the County Council should be proactive and strive to exceed the requirements of the EQIA;
- h) library premises were much used by community groups, but such groups could make more use of other civic buildings if opening times could be more flexible around evenings and weekends. Asked if a 'trusted key holder' scheme could help with this, Mr Pearson explained that some buildings were currently being accessed using such arrangements. He

undertook to look into the feasibility of opening parts of larger buildings while sealing off access to other, staff-only areas; and

- i) asked how the Summer Reading Challenge could be continued through the rest of the year, Mr Pearson explained that schools were being encouraged to see how they could sustain children's reading habits, perhaps by establishing a yearly themed reading scheme, in partnership with local libraries. Such schemes could be kept going if there were sufficient local support and demand for them. In addition, the Kent Digital Playground would focus on children and young people from disadvantaged communities.

The Deputy Cabinet Member, Mrs Hohler, thanked Members for their thoughtful contributions and a good debate. She recommended a scheme run by libraries in New York, in which displays at the library were tied in with course work at local schools, and parties of school children would be taken to the library as part of their course work.

It was RESOLVED that the progress made by the Libraries, Registration and Archives service in 2016-17 be noted and welcomed, with Members' comments above being noted, and the proposed service specification for 2017-18 be endorsed.

15. Regional Growth Fund Programmes and Framework for Monitoring Report *(Item 13)*

Mr Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, introduced the report and welcomed questions. He advised that due to the quantity of information within the report, a separate briefing would be required to look at this issue solely. The briefing would include what had happened in the past, the lessons learned and the current position of the recycle fund.

Jacqui Ward, Strategic Programme Manager (Business Investment), discussed the report and the following comments were made:

- i. Members were advised that they were able to meet outside of the Committee to discuss the report further if they had any concerns.
- ii. Although the creating of jobs and safeguarded jobs was amber on the Performance Dashboard, Ms Ward reassured the Committee that the report provided by RGF presented the two issues as green.
- iii. The format of the report was created in conjunction with Members of the Committee and the Business Investment Team to ensure that the statistics provided were those requested allowing an overview of how the program was performing.
- iv. Recycled funds had moved into a new phase; putting the three programs together. This was now within the public domain as the 'Kent and Medway Business Fund.' Jacqui Ward welcomed feedback on the format and ways of reporting on the performance of the new fund. The current format had been retained for now to allow comparisons with the previous programme.

- 1) Members discussed the report and the following comments were made:
 - i. The Chairman advised Members that there would be a separate briefing relating to the format of the report. Following this, Members would be able to identify what was imperative and must be included within the report if the format were to change.
 - ii. A Member wished it be noted that if a company was relaxed in its process with returns or making a re-payment, there must be a face-to-face consultation and not an email. Jacqui Ward advised that there was a process in place whereby she and a member of the team would do a site visit to the company in question and this was outlined within the report.
 - iii. A Member commented on the informative site visits and hoped that these continue to be organised.

It was RESOLVED that the report be NOTED.

16. Work Programme 2017/18
(Item 14)

- 1) The Chairman welcomed suggestions and comments from the Committee and asked for Members views on which items should be brought to future meetings of the Growth Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.
- 2) Members suggested holding a Members Briefing for the new Members and to have an update on Infrastructure issues within Kent County Council.
- 3) Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport welcomed Infrastructure items to future Growth Economic Development and Communities meetings.
- 4) RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2017-2018 be noted.