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To: County Council - 15th October 2009

Subject: Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary To ask County Council formally to adopt Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life - *Living Later Life to the Full* – in the light of discussions at Cabinet and the Policy Overview Committees.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Vision for Kent identifies seven key challenges, of which the ageing population is one. Demographic changes in Kent (and most of Western Europe) bring enormous opportunities as well as significant challenges. Older people are often the volunteers, carers, mentors and activists that provide the backbone of communities and Kent will benefit from having proportionately more of these people. In late 2007 Kent County Council ran a series of workshops with older citizens and partners to establish what people thought were the key issues and concerns relating to later life which needed action. This resulted in an embryonic Strategy for Later Life (February 2008) which has been further consulted upon. ASSPOC has taken the lead within the County Council on this work although the issues are far broader than social care and health, encompassing transport, leisure, housing, community safety and community planning and design.
- 1.2 Although KCC has initiated and driven this work, only by working in partnership across organisations in Kent can real improvements be made to the lives of older people. From the start, therefore, the Later Life work has been undertaken in partnership. Within the Kent Partnership, the Public Health Board agreed to take the lead, but recognised that the issues relating to older people cut across all the Kent Partnership Boards.
- 1.3 The Policy Framework (which will continue to evolve) is the result of these discussions and conferences. It represents the aspirations set out by those older people who contributed to the consultation, and the representatives of partner organisations, as well as KCC Members. On 10th February the Kent Partnership endorsed the Policy Framework, subject to it being considered by individual organisations, and asked that reports should be brought back in a year on the action that would be taken to achieve the aspirations set out in the Framework. Annex 1 summarises the priorities in the Framework, the full

document is at Annex 2 and KCC's action plan to deliver the aspirations set out in the Policy Framework is at Annex 3.

- 1.4 Cabinet considered the Framework on 30th March and asked that all the July Policy Overview Committees consider what they will do to deliver it. Within KCC, the Later Life work is a strand of the Regeneration Framework, linking closely with the other strategies and in part being delivered through them.

2. Discussions at the Policy Overview Committees (POCs)

2.1 Without exception, discussion at the POCs was animated not only because of the importance of the agenda but also because Members were excited by the cross-cutting nature of the issues. They enthusiastically supported the Policy Framework, evidently finding it a stimulating document. The main points to emerge in discussion were:

- If we get things right for older people we often get them right for everyone. The transformations KCC has made in accessing services and advice benefit all our citizens, including (indeed arguably especially) those in their later years. So Gateways, the 24 hour phone line, interactive websites and Kent TV have all had an impact.
- People want seamless services and the financial squeeze ahead makes it imperative that we look to combine and integrate services in a way that improves the customer experience whilst also delivering efficiency savings.
- The wide range of actions listed in the lengthy KCC action plan demonstrate the breadth of projects and activity already underway. However we need to distil out the most critical projects to be delivered over the next year, and ensure that the MTP and business planning process reflects those priorities.
- Transport had been identified during the consultation as high priority for action, and Members reinforced the importance of this, particularly for non-drivers and particularly (but not exclusively) in rural areas. The Integrated Transport Strategy is taking account of the issues raised by older people. Promoting voluntary transport schemes and making better use of the many mini-buses and vehicles used by the voluntary sector was mentioned several times by Members.
- Intergenerational activity was a major theme at every POC and Members gave many examples of innovative small-scale projects. It was agreed that specific work should be done on identifying and sharing good practice.
- The importance of supporting communities and individuals to take responsibility for themselves and their families and neighbours was highlighted. The voluntary and community sector is vital, but it's not only about formal volunteering but being a 'good neighbour' and creating cohesive communities where people are not socially isolated unless they want to be. Members gave several examples of local projects that achieved these sorts of aims, and again there was interest in spreading good practice.
- How do we measure the impact this activity is having in terms of improving outcomes for older people? We should see an improvement in indicators of wellbeing amongst older people over time, and it is important to monitor that.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The Framework looks at how older people want to live their lives, and is deliberately aspirational and positive, emphasising the benefits that the ageing population brings, and promoting a positive image of old age because this was an important message from the consultation. It sets out the overarching ambitions that KCC and its partners have in improving the quality of life for older people. It will play an important role in ensuring that there is an ongoing focus on preventative activities that will enable people to live their later lives to the full. Work is now going on across KCC directorates with Districts & Boroughs, Health, Police and Fire & Rescue and the voluntary sector to map out activities already underway which support these priorities and targets. This will enable us to more effectively publicise the examples of excellence already underway, or planned, of which people may not be aware. This process will also enable us to see if there are any gaps in current service provision and decide whether further action should be taken.
- 3.2 The Regeneration Framework has a chapter entitled 'Embracing a Growing and Ageing Population' which identifies a number of actions that KCC wish to promote. These all fall within the strategic framework set out within the Policy Framework for Later Life. The ensuing mapping exercise and streamlined action plan will therefore provide a vehicle for taking this element of the Regeneration Framework forward.
- 3.3 It is important that by creating a Policy Framework for Later Life we do not establish a new 'silo' for older people but build consideration of older people's interests into the planning of existing services, organisations and partnerships. All aspects of public service and policy development should take account of the interests of all generations. Younger people need to prepare for their futures and everyone should be encouraged to plan for their later lives, whatever their age.

4. Recommendations

In view of the positive reception at the Policy Overview Committees, the County Council is asked to ADOPT Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life

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1) To ensure communities are designed to be ‘age proof’, stronger, safer and sustainable, by:

- Working with developers to make sure that new developments are designed to be sustainable and age-proof.
- Actively tackling housing disrepair and supporting older people in maintaining and adapting their own homes.
- Developing and designing existing communities to be more “age friendly”, in respect both of physical infrastructure and social inclusion
- Helping older people feel safe and secure within their own homes and community
- Preparing for changes in the environment and climate-proofing communities to make them sustainable for the future

2) To improve transport and accessibility, by:

- Increasing transport options for older people, including services for those who are disabled or live in rural areas.
- Making people more aware of the transport options already available to them

3) To enable older people to lead healthier lives and have better access to healthcare, by:

- Focussing on the prevention of health problems
- Enabling the older people of Kent to participate in regular exercise and live an active life
- Developing better integrated health and social care services
- Assisting people to manage their own health and independence in order to keep living in the community for as long as possible

4) To support older people’s citizenship, learning and participation in community life, by:

- Encouraging older people’s participation and inclusion in community activity, raising social capital
- Ensuring older people have a voice and are able to exert their influence over policy making
- Enabling older people to have the opportunity and ability to participate in life-long learning
- Making sure older people in Kent have employment opportunities if they want them.
- Helping older people have access to new technology as well as the ability to use it

5) To ensure those older people who need support to live independently have choice, control and good quality care, by:

- Ensuring service provision is based upon a person centred approach
- Working to remove the barriers that can impair the quality of older people’s lives
- Making sure individuals have access to ‘joined up’ information when they need it
- Supporting carers in having a life apart from caring

6) To encourage people to plan for a secure later life, by:

- Making older people in Kent more aware of the services and support available including access to financial information and advice.
- Reducing fuel poverty by increasing the take-up of energy saving initiatives and increasing awareness of affordable warmth.
- Improving the economic well-being of older people within Kent

7) To promote a positive image of later life and dignity and respect for older people, by:

- Promoting the value of later life and changing attitudes towards older members of society
- Encouraging inter-generational activities and community cohesion