

## 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 Wednesday, 29 November 2017.

PRESENT: Mr P W A Lake (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Mr R H Bird, Mr A Booth, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mr J P McInroy, Dr L Sullivan, Mr B J Sweetland and Mr J Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Abbott (Director of Education Planning and Access), Mr S Baggs (Energy Manager), Mr S Bagshaw (Head of Fair Access), Ms C McKenzie (Sustainability and Climate Change Manager) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2017** (Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **4. Minutes of meeting held on 16 October 2017** (Item A5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **5. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2017** (Item A6)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

##### **6. Pupil Premium Select Committee Topic Review - timetable extension** (Item A11)

1. The Chairman read the following statement declaring this item urgent:

*“Following a request from the Pupil Premium Select Committee, I have agreed that the report regarding the extension to their timetable be considered as an urgent item. It is considered urgent as it was not available at the time of publication and there is a need for the Committee to determine whether the extension to the Select Committee’s timetable should be approved”.*

2. The Chairman explained that Pupil Premium was an important topic on which the Select Committee were working extremely hard. He had spoken to the Chairman

of the Select Committee who had confirmed that Members of the Select Committee would still like to have discussions with deprived schools where pupil premium uptake was at its greatest.

3. There was a request that the extension should allow the Select Committee to visit schools outside of Kent, and it was suggested that Rapporteurs could also be used to gather information.
4. In response to concerns from Members about the resourcing of Select Committees Ben Watts explained that a bit of extra support had been moved to assist with Select Committee work; however Legal and Democratic Services had to make £190k of budget savings so Members would have to make choices in the support that they would like. It was widely recognised that Members valued the work of the Select Committees and Mr Watts was committed to ensuring that his service could respond to members needs effectively.

RESOLVED that Members agree to the proposed extension and the amended timetable of the Review.

## **7. Grammar School and Social Mobility Select Committee - Progress update** *(Item A7)*

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr Garsed and Mr Roy, the Scrutiny Committee's two Parent Governor Representatives to their first meeting.
2. Mr Gough introduced the report which sought to respond to the recommendations of the Grammar School and Social Mobility Select Committee. Mr Gough highlighted a couple of areas in which this was being done:
  - a. Engagement with schools and parents to determine ways in which barriers to children from lower income families attending grammar school, whether real or perceived, could be addressed.
  - b. Working with admissions to ensure that Pupil Premium (PP) was taken into account in Grammar schools admissions criteria
3. It was helpful to look at the difference between children from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieved well at KS2 and their peers who also achieved well and to study the differential between those who go on to grammar school. It was also essential to look at the barriers to grammar school candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds.
4. Mr Abbott explained that the September 2018 intake would be the first time that it would be possible to test if the recommendations from the Select Committee had had an effect.
5. Mr Bagshaw explained the success the team had had with engaging with schools, 85% of schools had Free School Meals (FSM) PP priority within their arrangements. The few schools which hadn't could demonstrate that they were taking a higher than average intake of FSM PP children. There was currently no legal mandate to include but KCC did encourage schools and had had positive feedback.

6. Members discussed the Kent Test; Mr Gough explained that changes had been made; it was not possible to make the test tutor proof but it would be a better reflection of raw ability. Practice material was online to ensure all children had access to similar tests to familiarise themselves with the test.
7. In response to a query about the timing of the test this was to allow families to make an informed choice about schools, before the deadline to apply.
8. One Member commented on the many circumstances which put PP children at a disadvantage, the response usually resulted in a system which advantaged everyone but this didn't solve the problem of social mobility in children. The Member asked for more data, such as the numbers of pupil places which had been freed up in grammar schools, how many new places were being made available within the admission criteria along with data setting out how many PP children had been put forward for the Kent Test.
9. Members discussed Virtual School Kent (VSK) and the officers committed to send Members the link to the information on the VSK website.
10. Mr Bagshaw explained that for 2017: 11,085 pupils in Kent who sat the Kent Test of those 1,660 were FSM Ever. Of those 4,671 children in Kent Schools were assessed as suitable for Grammar Schools and of those 356 were FSM Ever.
11. Children assessed as suitable for grammar via headteacher assessment were just under 40% of the total.
12. A Member referred to the outreach within grammar schools and the sharing of best practice, and Mr Bagshaw explained that the schools would provide a summary of activities which had taken place, KCC had no control over this but encouraged it as much as possible. Officers would provide this summary information to Members.
13. The officers were asked to circulate data relating to the number of PP pupils who succeeded in the Kent Test and then did not take up a place in grammar schools.
14. Referring to KCC's transport policy Mr Bagshaw explained that this met its legal obligations, further discussion would be had with members and through formal consultation.

RESOLVED that Members welcome the information offered by officers during the meeting and the Scrutiny Committee acknowledge the completed actions and stated approach to delivering the Select Committee recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **8. Energy Security Select Committee - Presentation on progress of recommendations** *(Item A8)*

1. Members received a presentation from Ms McKenzie, Head of Sustainable Business and Communities and Mr Baggs, Energy Manager, updating Members on the progress of the Energy Select Committee recommendations. The

presentation can be viewed online via this link – Energy Select Committee presentation.

2. It was considered that good progress was being made on the recommendations but there was still a lot of work to do.
3. Members discussed the proposed Solar Farm in Swale Borough, this was a private development on farmland KCC had a policy on the grade of farmland not to be used for such developments and this farmland was considered suitable. it was considered to be a balance in terms of scale and generation, an Environmental Report on the area was not yet available but was expected.
4. Members raised the following points:
  - a. Land could be reverted back to agricultural
  - b. KCC should look at assets and opportunities to move forward to make the best use of assets and provide revenue streams
  - c. Storage of electricity with an oversupply at times.
5. Ms McKenzie explained that KCC would be looking at storage, along with artificial intelligence and the use of data to analyse how electricity was used and when during the day. There might be opportunities for battery storage in the future with a number of potential income generating opportunities for KCC.
6. A Member raised the issue of designs for schools and the potential for building with solar panels, Mr Baggs explained that he had been looking at opportunities for design within the schools' budget; Mr Baggs would send Members the information relating to the case studies he had looked at. One of the actions within the report was to look at KCC's design and building standards and it was hoped that this would be looked at within the next six months, the Chairman asked for progress to be reported back to Members.
7. A Member referred to the use of heating systems in Holland which were very successful, Members could contribute to the planning system by advising or assisting at an early stage. There was also potential to use the prison buildings on Sheppey which could generate or provide a source of heating or power.
8. Members discussed Electric Vehicles, with regarding to charging points it was considered that the infrastructure was still not quite there and there was still a lot to be done. The Government had released a large amount of money for improving charging points.
9. Energy security was an international issue, Lords cricket ground was completely sustainable with renewable energy.
10. Members discussed the use of waste to provide energy, KCC's waste strategy looked for areas of opportunity and there were interesting developments across the world with using waste that could not be recycled for energy. There had been studies in Germany turning waste in diesel type fuel, but there were concerns over air quality.

RESOLVED that Members thank Ms McKenzie and Mr Baggs for their excellent presentation and note its contents.

**9. Exempt minute - 7 November 2017**

*(Item A10)*

RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of the word 'information' in paragraph 19 the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 7 November were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.