

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 Darent Room - Sessions House on Wednesday, 26 June 2019.

PRESENT: Mr A M Ridgers (Chairman), Mr S Holden (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P M Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr A J Hook (Substitute for Mr D S Daley), Mr A Booth, Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr N J Collor, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D Farrell, Ms S Hamilton (Substitute for Mr S C Manion), Mr R A Marsh (Substitute for Mr A Cook) and Mr J Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M C Dance and Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development), Mrs S Holt-Castle (Interim Director of Environment, Planning and Enforcement) and Miss G Little (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

156. Membership

(Item 2)

The Committee noted that Mr D Daley had replaced Mr A Hook on the Committee.

157. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 3)

Apologies were received from Mr S Manion, Mr A Cook and Mr D Daley.

Mrs S Hamilton, Mr A Marsh and Mr A Hook attended as substitutes respectively.

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

(Item 4)

Mr A Hook declared an interest in Item 8 on the agenda due to his previous professional involvement in the prosecution of doorstep criminals.

159. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2019

(Item 5)

1. Benjamin Watts (General Counsel) addressed the Committee and provided clarity around the process of drafting minutes.
2. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 7 March are a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

160. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2019

(Item 6)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting on 9 May 2019 are a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

161. Verbal updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 7)

1. Mr M Hill, OBE (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) provided an update to Members on the following:
 - (a) The Kent school games which was held on 25th June 2019 was a Government led initiative designed to deliver competitive school sports for all young people. Mr Hill commended the success of the games with 700 participants and over 55 schools that took part.
 - (b) The three-week local engagement exercise for the library opening hours had finished and Mr Hill thanked all Members who had encouraged public participation. The level of response had enabled the Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) Service to produce an opening hours template that had been tailored to suit customer need and meet an extensive range of preferences. Mr Hill informed the Committee that a revised library opening hour framework would be implemented in the autumn.
 - (c) With regard to additional funding from Parish Councils to support libraries in their area, Mr Hill said that there were a number of complicated issues that needed to be addressed, and he had asked the cross-party Members Working Group to work in conjunction with officers to devise a policy on how funding contributions from Parish Councils could be utilised.
 - (d) Folkestone library was closed on 12th June due to structural concerns caused through the penetration of heavy rainfall. Mr Hill was pleased to announce that the ground floor of Folkestone library had been re-opened, however, extensive investigative work needed to be carried out to review the damage and work required to fully replenish the first floor of the library.
2. Mr M Dance, (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) provided an update to Members on the following:
 - (a) The Kent Excellence in Business Awards was held on 20th June 2019. The event marked its 11th anniversary with over 650 in attendance.
 - (b) The recent Business Advisory Board was well represented with a number of individuals in attendance from sectors around the county. Mr Dance said that the representatives provided an insightful synopsis of current affairs and the anticipated changes over the coming months leading up to Brexit.

- (c) Kent County Council was working with Pas De Calais, West Flanders and Zeeland on the European Straits Initiative to look at the multilateral cooperation of local and regional public bodies to enhance working relationships and share innovative technology around the importation and exportation of trade. Mr Dance welcomed Mr Smith (Director of Economic Development) to address the Committee and provide an explanation of how Kent County Council (KCC) was working with the European embassies.

Mr Smith said that the primary objective was to build good relations for the long-term between KCC and its European counterparts in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. He informed Members that KCC had received support from the National Embassies within the aforementioned countries who had also been in discussion with the Foreign Office to ensure that KCC's work did not hinder the discussions and negotiations that were taking place around Brexit. KCC continued to look at every opportunity to work with neighbouring countries where they were seen to support respective economies and improve the quality of lives for its residents; initiatives that fitted into the wider UK diplomatic effort. He assured the Committee that the Government was clear in its stance that the UK leaving the European Union was not the UK leaving Europe and that it remained a valued partner in tackling the shared challenges. In March 2019, the Leader of KCC wrote to the French Ambassador with the clear message that, regardless of the outcome of the UK's exit from the EU, Local Government should continue to enhance its relationship with European counterparts. All learning would be encapsulated in the Memorandum of Understanding. Mr Smith informed Members that a report would be presented to the Committee in the autumn with further explanation.

- 3. The Cabinet Members and Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport respond to comments and questions as follows:
 - (a) Mr Hill said that the Kent School games was a bi-annual event, however, the Government had launched its own sport games which was a separate event and this would be held at different intervals.
 - (b) In response to the contribution from Parish Councils to support local libraries, Mr Hill said that the initial issue was around the funding gap, however, agreed to review the scope of the Members Working Group and whether their remit could be expanded to include the review of other forms of funding.
 - (c) In response to concerns regarding KCC's preparation in advance of Brexit, Mrs Cooper said that the issue that posed a greater risk to Brexit was trader readiness. Both traders and freight couriers were not prepared to invest in purchasing the required documents due to the uncertainty of a deal/ no deal Brexit, however, in the instance of a 'worst case scenario' no deal Brexit, Kent traders who failed to show the correct paperwork would not be able to continue across the border and this would impact on freight fluidity. KCC continued to press Government for a national campaign around trader readiness. Mrs Cooper informed the Committee that France had already built the required infrastructure to manage the changes brought about by Brexit and had identified freight handling areas within all their ports. Excellent work

continued to be done by the communication officers within KCC, the blue light services and the Kent Resilience Forum to tackle trader readiness. In addition, discussions were underway around KCC hosting a seminar conference in September 2019 to help support local traders and ensure they received the guidance and support required ahead of Brexit in October 2019.

- (d) Mr Dance confirmed that the Straits Initiative included 12 European countries.
- (e) Mr Payne (Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste) was in attendance and informed the Committee that Environment, Planning and Enforcement hosted a joint KCC and Pas de Calais air quality event in Dover on 20 June 2019 which was attended by the Vice President du Department du Pas de Calais. Mr Payne commended the success of the event.
- (f) Mrs Cooper said that operation Brock was Highways England's response to tackle congestion created by queues at the border. In response to the metal barrier, Mrs Cooper said that it would not be possible for Highways England to disassemble and reassemble the barrier within a short period of time should a strike or blockade occur and therefore Highways England took the decision to keep it assembled permanently. KCC had made a request to Highways England to look at the accident record and enforcement procedures against drivers, and how the barrier could be better utilised to facilitate separate freight traffic to increase traffic fluidity on the M20.

4. RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted, with thanks.

162. An Update on the Prevalence and Impact of Doorstep Crime in Kent (Item 8)

Steve Rock (Head of Trading Standards) and Clive Phillips (Trading Standards, Complex Investigations Manager) were in attendance for this item

1. Mr Hill, OBE (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) introduced the report that provided an update on the prevalence and impact of Doorstep Crime in Kent and the actions to be taken by Trading Standards to improve information sharing and data intelligence. Mr Hill informed the Committee that since publication of the report, Kent Trading Standards had secured funding for an Intelligence Analyst for an initial period of twelve months.
2. Mr Phillips presented a short nationally funded film which highlighted the significant impact of Doorstep Crime (on vulnerable adults) and said that the preliminary analysis of data related to Doorstep Crime in Kent had revealed the recurrent inconsistencies in crime recording and therefore the data captured to date could not be relied on. Mr Phillips informed the Committee that primary role of the Intelligence Analyst would be to work with District and Borough Councils as well as other enforcement agencies to instigate and implement the sharing of victim data to ensure consistent information between all partner agencies and create an agreed single reporting method that could be accessed by all partner agencies.

3. The officers responded to comments and questions as follows:

- (a) Mr Phillips assured the Committee that the units in the Public Protection group which included Wardens, Trading Standards, Intelligence and Community Safety, all worked very closely with Kent Police in pursuing criminals, safeguarding victims and raising public awareness through a number of educational campaigns. Mr Phillips said that all victims of Doorstep Crime in Kent had access to free telephone advice from the Citizens Advice Consumer Service and those who were deemed to be particularly vulnerable would be visited by a Warden, a Police Prevent Officer or Victim of Safeguarding Officer. He said that Wardens had attended a number of community groups to raise awareness of Doorstep Crime where the film had been well received.
- (b) In response to queries regarding the need for a single point of contact to report Doorstep Crime in Kent, Mr Phillips said that the reason why the emergency number '999' was referred to in the film was because if a crime were in progress, the Police could be deployed immediately to respond and arrest criminals on the scene, however, Trading Standards did not have the capacity or same legal powers to act on criminal activity. Trading Standards was working with the charitable sector, specifically Age UK, to look at how they could utilise their befriending services. The role of the Victim Safeguarding Officer also involved working with the charitable sectors to identify what services operated within specific areas and ensure that vulnerable victims had the correct support from those service once the Safeguarding Officer's role had ended. Supplementary to this, Mr Rock informed the Committee that all calls received by the Citizens Advice Consumer Service number were filtered through to Trading Services and then onto the Protection Intelligence Team who were then responsible for assessing the risk of the calls coming through. The Protection Intelligence Team would then produce an intelligence package that would be sent to the Complex Investigations Unit in Trading Standards and the case would be assigned. Mr Rock said that by using a single point of contact, it would allow the Trading Services team and other partner agencies to access shared data and make informed decisions as to where resources would be most effectively deployed.
- (c) Mr Phillips informed Members that there was a dedicated fraud team in Kent Police and that Kent and Essex Police were promoting prevention of fraud through educational programmes. Trading Standards did attend regular meetings with partner agencies to address the inherent challenges of dealing with reports of fraud such as capacity to respond.
- (d) In response to other forms of fraud, such as online abuse and telephone scams and whether the new data would be used to build a more detailed picture of other victims of fraud beyond Doorstep Crime, Mr Phillips said that out of the 212 visits carried out by the Safeguarding Officers, a survey revealed that a majority of victims did not have access to the internet or telephone and fell within the category of socially isolated victims. Mr Phillips acknowledged that fraud covered a range of criminal activities, however, the

report presented to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee was primarily focused on Doorstep Crime and vulnerable adults. Over the next 12 months, the role of the Intelligence Analyst would be to produce a system whereby every type of scam could be recorded.

- (e) Mr Rock informed the Committee that scams were a national issue, however work was being done in conjunction with the National Trading Standards Scam Team to identify all forms of fraud within the country and a scams conference was due to be held in Kent on 1 October 2019.
- (f) Mr Phillips confirmed that Trading Standards worked with HMRC and on one of the reported prosecutions worked closely with the National Crime Agency (NCA) to recoup money through tax invasion and said that all intelligence was shared with HM Revenue & Customs and Department for Work & Pensions as criminals often abused the benefit system. The in-house financial investigators recovered £200,000 from criminals in compensation. If there were no victims of fraud, the compensation money would be reinvested into the Financial Investigations team along with any fines recovered from criminal assets. Mr Phillips said that the £200,000 was the amount of assets available to the victims, the entire amount of money lost by the victim was not always recoverable. Where criminals had properties, Trading Standards could restrain the property so that it could not be sold until compensation was paid back to the victim.
- (g) With regard to telephone scams, Mr Phillips recommended that residents used the True Call Blockers which was a national system that blocked scam calls and monitored phone lines. Kent County Council had invested in a number of call blockers with the proceeds of crime money and have placed these in the homes of vulnerable people. Mr Phillips said that there were a number of telecommunication companies that offered blocker services, however, the key to tackling fraud was through preventative actions and ensuring that members of the public were receiving the regular communication updates published by Trading Standards.
- (h) Mr Phillips agreed to circulate the full-length film to the Committee.

4. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

163. Performance Dashboard (Item 9)

Helen Groombridge (Performance & Analytics Manager) was in attendance for this item.

- 1. Mrs Groombridge introduced the Performance Dashboard which showed progress made against targets set for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) up to the end of March 2019 and welcomed comments from the Committee.
- 2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

164. 19/00046 - No Use Empty (NUE) update and continuation of the initiative
(Item 10)

David Smith (Director of Economic Development) and Steve Grimshaw (Strategic Programme Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Dance (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) introduced the report that set out the No Use Empty (NUE) initiative and commended the scheme on its success.
2. Mr Grimshaw provided Members with an update on the initiative, its future plans and sought the Committee's support for the continuation of the scheme, including the authority to bid for additional sources of funding which would help contribute to the delivery of good quality housing in the county; and that the authority be delegated to the Director of Economic Development to ensure appropriate governance was applied when entering into legal agreements. Mr Grimshaw addressed the achievements of the NUE initiative and said that 5,911 properties had reverted back into use and that there had been a 40% reduction in empty homes since the launch of the scheme.
3. The officer responded to comments and questions as follows:
 - (a) Mr Grimshaw said that Kent County Council (KCC) took every opportunity to provide funding across the entire county, however the highest concentration of empty properties remained within the East. He assured the Committee that the NUE initiative had a proven track record and had been recognised nationally for its contribution in bringing long term empty properties back into use through other projects and funding opportunities that offered different loan products. This included interventions such as the Affordable Homes Project whereby the Homes and Communities Agency awarded £ 750,100to KCC for the NUE initiative to deliver an affordable homes scheme and Live Margate whereby the NUE was allocated £2m in 2018 from the Live Margate Project to bring long term empty properties back into use.
 - (b) With regard to the renovation cost of commercial properties, Mr Grimshaw said that the average cost of renovation projects was between £50k to £60k per unit. He informed Members that the money from the growing places fund offered greater flexibility than the parameters set out within the main residential scheme.
 - (c) In response to queries regarding the delegation of authority for spend, Mr Grimshaw said that the current delegation arrangements in place for Economic Development was that Mr Smith (Director of Economic Development) was permitted to approve spend up to £1m, Mr Grimshaw as the officer could approve up to £500k, however in terms of the loans themselves, Mr Grimshaw said that most of the loans were significantly smaller and would be managed within the parameters and regulations imposed by KCC Finance. Mr Grimshaw assured Members that there was a process for assessment and approval, all of which required sign off by the

appropriate delegated officer, the Head of Service or Director to ensure full control over spend.

- (d) In terms of the ability to provide funding for empty sites, Mr Grimshaw said that if a building had been demolished and that site was vacant, providing it had the relevant approval to create a commercial or residential property then Kent County Council would welcome the project. Mr Grimshaw reminded Members that whilst Kent County Council offered a range of loan products, funding was limited, and approval of such projects were reliant on outstanding loans being repaid and recycled.
- (e) Mr Grimshaw said that regardless of whether the loan was issued by KCC or other District Councils, the loan would be treated as one application under the name of KCC and only one charge would be applied to that property. Mr Grimshaw said that KCC had a service level agreement with the three district councils (Tunbridge Wells, Dover and Folkestone & Hythe) which provided money to KCC to cover risk should any loan fail to be repaid.
- (f) With regard to defaulted Top Up Loans, Mr Grimshaw said that there had only been two cases to date, with a combined loss of £143k which represented 0.6% of the £27m that had been awarded, but because the same loans charged interest and there were charges for delayed repayments, sufficient income had been generated to eradicate the bad debt.
- (g) In response to queries regarding EU funding, Mr Grimshaw said that discussions around potential EU projects had ceased. Whilst the UK Government had provided assurance that an EU funded project would continue to receive funding for the duration of that project's lifespan, European counterparts had received the misinformation that funding would no longer be provided and therefore KCC could not progress any further.
- (h) With regard to Top Up Loans, Mr Grimshaw assured Members that other district and borough councils had put money into the scheme. Thanet District Council offered a different loan product that KCC administered on their behalf which was the Thanet Owner Occupiers Loan Scheme which had been established to encourage people to move into specific wards in Margate (primarily Margate Central and Cliftonville) in an attempt to lift that area's profile. The terms and conditions of the scheme was that a £20k interest free loan could be made available to be repaid on a monthly basis and secured as a first or second charge with a repayment time of seven to ten years (depending on the type of application). Mr Grimshaw said that several similar projects had been taken forward and discussions were currently underway with Thanet District Council to review whether additional money was available to broaden the scheme across Thanet. In terms of other district councils, Mr Grimshaw assured the Committee that every opportunity continued to be taken to seek further money from other district councils to expand the scheme, but due to limited budgets and conflicting priorities, further funding was not always possible. Mr Grimshaw welcomed further funding and said that there was an opportunity to attract business rates money that may not have been

identified for future use to deliver new homes, shops and create new council tax to benefit the future economy.

- (i) Members commended the scheme and the work of the officers involved in helping to deliver it.
4. RESOLVED that the proposed decision (19/00046) to be taken by the Leader and Cabinet Member for Health reform to:
- (a) agree to the continuation of the NUE initiative as approved in the Budget Book 2019-20 to at least 2021-22 with a further update to be provided at that time; and
 - (b) agree that authority be delegated to the Director of Economic Development for the NUE initiative to take appropriate actions including, but not limited to, KCC entering into legal agreements (loan agreements, legal charges, personal guarantees, equity loans, joint ventures, deed of priority, deed of postponement), consider and approve requests which may require KCC consent and discharge of legal charges, recovery of loans through legal action, as necessary to implement this decision,
- be endorsed.

165. Regional Growth Fund (RGF) Programmes Monitoring Report *(Item 11)*

David Smith (Director of Economic Development) and Martyn Riley (Programme Manager (Business Investment)) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Smith introduced the report that set out the results of Kent County Council's (KCCs) monitoring returns that had been obtained in the period of January to March 2019, from companies that had received loans from the three Regional Growth Fund Programmes: Expansion East Kent, Tiger and Escalate. Mr Smith reminded Members that the schemes were funded through money that had been allocated by Central Government and therefore KCC were subject to the conditions imposed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in terms of its management.
2. The officers responded to comments and questions as follows:
 - (a) With regard to the recovery rate of bad debts, Mr Riley and Mr Smith informed the Committee that there was a recurrent issue whereby companies continued to argue their inability to repay KCC, however, a considerable amount of time continued to be devoted in recovering funds before issuing new loans. Mr Smith said that 80% of the original loans had been repaid in full and that KCC were in a position to reoffer the recycled money back into the market. Mr Riley assured Members that KCC had taken a flexible approach to re-payments and engaged with companies as much as practically possible to support them in their re-payments rather than issue legal action. In previous years there had

been a number of Government funded initiatives that operated on a local level which offered support to companies and KCC had worked closely with those services. However, the change in economic circumstance meant that the Government stopped offering support and KCC took on the responsibility of all expenses. Mr Riley informed the Committee that there were very few schemes available that KCC could tap into; the Kent and Medway Growth Hub was established in an attempt to support companies who were in financial difficulty, however, with limited resources there was very little that KCC were able to do. Mr Smith provided assurance that the debt recovery rate within the last quarter had not deteriorated and that there had been no increase in red ratings within the debt recovery category.

- (b) Mr Smith informed the Committee that the current economic climate and future climate was significantly different to that seven years ago when the scheme was first launched. Mr Smith said that the recent evidence revealed a freeze on investment from a number of Medium enterprises and said that fewer applicant companies were approaching KCC with investment proposals that were compliant with the basic criteria of the scheme (i.e. was the company solvent, would the company produce new jobs, was the business plan deliverable and manageable). Mr Smith said that work was being done to refresh the offer in an attempt to attract more companies and that KCC were looking at opportunities to engage with Leaders, elected Members and officers from the District and Borough Councils to review ways in which companies in those areas could be encouraged to re-engage with the scheme.
- (c) In response to queries as to whether the number of jobs created had been included or deducted from the figures, Mr Riley said that the Government had issued funding which entailed a number of conditions, one of those was that jobs created would be for a minimum of three years. If a business was to go into liquidation after four years, then that figure would still be reported to ensure that consistent information was being shared with Government and other bodies. Mr Riley was unable to provide the 'job lost' figure, however, informed Members that this information could be circulated upon request outside of the Committee meeting.
- (d) With regard to whether KCC could better utilise the money elsewhere, Mr Riley informed the Committee that the money was not KCC's to give away and that it was contracted money from central government with a strict set of terms and conditions imposed by BEIS that KCC had to abide by. Mr Riley agreed that every opportunity had to be taken to review the scheme, however, highlighted to Members the difficulty in implementing change when operating under contractually restrained procedures as an authority. Both BEIS and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government were pleased with the management of the scheme in terms of the level of performance and governance that KCC had demonstrated. Mr Riley informed Members that should KCC change the way in which it allocates central government funding, Government would need to be involved in that process as it would require a number of contractual changes. KCC would also retain responsibility for all expenditure and contractual obligations until the last repayment was received.

- (e) Mr Riley acknowledged Members concerns regarding the terminology used in the report and agreed to revise this for future reports. He confirmed that the £4,027,000 was included within the monitoring period January to March 2019.
- (f) Mr Smith said that the Council had always taken security against a loan and assured the Committee that the security was always valued. KCC had not taken shares as a form of security as these were not tangible assets. The reason as to why KCC had deployed significant effort into recouping money was primarily due to the difficulty in liquidating tangible assets at a value that KCC had originally obtained them at when the loan was first issued. KCC had used Invicta Law and the Invicta Law appointed agents to recover outstanding loans, however, some debts were unrecoverable. This would often occur when a company ceased to exist, and the legal process meant that KCC could no longer make any attempt to retrieve the repayment of the loan.
- (g) In response to comments regarding discrepancies within the figures, Mr Smith said that the report did not include the equity investments that are briefly referred to which would be the difference in the total amount made. Mr Smith informed the Committee that the scheme had created jobs and placed additional investment in businesses, all of which was entirely dependent on the intervention of KCC. Mr Smith invited Members to address him directly outside of the Committee meeting with any further queries or comments regarding individual companies as officers would be able to provide greater detail on specific schemes.
- (h) Mrs Cooper (Corporate Director for Growth, environment and Transport) assured Members that KCC pursued all its bad debts regardless of where the funding had come from. All money managed by the Council was public money and pursued using rigorous measures.
- (i) Members thanked the officers for the scope and breadth of their responses and commended the scheme in generating recycled money which improved economic growth, however, a significant amount of work needed to be done to encourage greater interest in the scheme.

3. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

166. 2018/19 Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate Equality Review (Item 12)

Sarah Bedingfield (Service Manager - Innovation, Digital & Libraries) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Bedingfield introduced the report that set out the position statement for the Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) Directorate for 2018/19 regarding the embedment of equality and diversity within work programmes and organisational development. Mrs Bedingfield informed the Committee that the evidence for each project identified had been captured through the Members of the Equality and Diversity group having reviewed one another's division. The GET directorate continued to take a firm approach to equality and diversity as it was integral to

KCCs customer service programme and continued to improve the ways in which it understood and responded to customers and non-customers' needs using customer data across all ten protected characteristics. Mrs Bedingfield highlighted to Members the key areas that had been addressed throughout the report which included: GET progress made against KCC equality and diversity objectives, the approach taken by GET to address equality and diversity, additional projects delivered in 2018/19 that were aligned to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC); and the promotion of equality and diversity awareness through the use of sensory equipment (Dementia Alliance Ageing Suit) to help the GET directorate to further understand the needs of its customers.

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted, and that the Committee would continue to receive an annual report in order to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010.

167. Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy - Draft for public Consultation (Item 13)

Carolyn McKenzie (Head of Sustainable Business and Communities) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr M Payne introduced the report that set out the final draft of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy which was due to go out for public consultation on 1 July 2019 for a period of twelve weeks. The draft strategy had been developed in consultation with officers across Kent and Medway districts and had been shaped by the Cross-Party Member Group whom Mr Payne thanked for their ongoing contribution. The report highlighted the specific opportunities and actions that needed to be undertaken for the economy, business and communities and identified the need for an evidenced-based pathway to deliver clean growth for Kent and Medway.
2. Mrs McKenzie informed Members that the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy was a sub strategy of the Kent Environment Strategy and reiterated that it had been delivered in partnership with district colleagues and stakeholders. Mrs McKenzie highlighted the keys areas for consideration which included the work that needed to be done with regard to the Kent Design Refresh, the emerging Enterprise and Productivity Strategy which looked to support the growth of low carbon goods and environmental services sector as demand for new technologies increased; Strategic Planning policies in relation to district heating systems and sustainable travel infrastructure, the importance of Community Wardens and the role they played in identifying vulnerable residents who could benefit from schemes and alerting Trading Standards to scams that they may be a victim of (specifically around solar panel installation/heating etc.); and finally the green space and Public Rights of Way hedge schemes to reduce carbon emissions. Mrs McKenzie informed Members that the Strategy did not highlight specific projects as these would be examined as they come forward via the appropriate business case and governance route. Mrs McKenzie said that the

consultation was due to start on 1 July 2019 and welcomed Members suggestions as to where they felt the document should be presented.

3. The officer responded to comments and questions as follows:

- (a) Mrs McKenzie assured Members that the National Grid was a key issue and said that there were a number of projects within the strategy that referred to energy investments, in particular, work was being done with the Tri-LEP Strategy that was linked to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to look at where further funding could be encouraged to facilitate energy investment and infrastructure. Mrs McKenzie said that the primary challenge was around funding and who would be responsible for driving and delivering those projects.
- (b) With regard to electric vehicles, the Government offered grants to support the wider use of electric and hybrid vehicles via the Office of Low Emissions Vehicles (OLEV).
- (c) In response to queries regarding the insulation of homes, Mrs McKenzie acknowledged the impossibilities and expensive nature of insulating homes and said that the policy market around domestic sector retrofit needed to be reviewed. There was a Warm Homes Scheme that helped those living in gas operated homes to convert to oil, however, Kent County Council continued in its efforts to lobby to Government and sought guidance on how to approach the housing sector. Mrs McKenzie informed Members that the housing technology was rapidly changing and that responsibility for addressing those issues fell within the remit of the District Councils. The work undertaken on the Kent Design re-refresh would address those issues and assurance had been provided by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that they would be carrying out a review of the building regulations for housing in the near future.
- (d) Mrs McKenzie confirmed that work was being undertaken in conjunction with Sharon Thompson (Head of Planning Applications Group) to look at how KCC could incorporate solar panels on new builds and utilise existing government funding to facilitate that. A business case has also been prepared to look at whether existing schools could benefit from the solar scheme.
- (e) Mrs McKenzie assured the Committee that lighting had been installed in Public Rights of Way for those who travelled by foot or used cycle paths; safety was a priority for KCC and Mrs McKenzie recognised the importance of safety for Kent's residents when looking at minimising emission levels.
- (f) In response to queries regarding whether carbon emissions were monitored by outside bodies, Mrs McKenzie agreed to liaise with partner agencies regarding the enforcement of planning conditions and would report back to the Member directly.

- (g) With regard to electric vehicles, Mrs McKenzie informed Members that industries were being encouraged to join the Distributer Takeback Scheme (DTS) and other companies were also looking at how electric vehicle batteries could be used to power homes as battery life for domestic usage superseded the battery life when used in electric vehicles. However, issues remained around the metals used in batteries and how these would be decomposed.
4. RESOLVED that specific opportunities and actions for economy, business and communities be recognised and that any further avenues of engagement that should be undertaken during the public consultation phase be noted.

168. Members' Recent Visit to Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (EDC)
(Item 14)

Rob Hancock (Programme Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Hancock introduced the report that provided an update to Members on the recent visit to Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and outlined the programme of future visits to Kent districts in 2019/20. Mr Hancock informed the Committee that the Member visit to Folkestone & Hythe on 14 June 2019 and the visit to Tunbridge Wells on 12 July would be presented at the September meeting.

The following visits had been confirmed:

- Thanet – September 2019
 - Ashford – October 2019
 - Canterbury – December 2019
 - Maidstone – February 2020
 - Sevenoaks – May 2020
2. The Chairman thanked Mr Hancock and all those involved for the hospitality and breadth of information that had been provided to Members who had attended the district visits.
3. RESOLVED that the report be endorsed.

169. Work Programme 2019/20
(Item 15)

1. RESOLVED that the work programme be noted subject to the inclusion of an item on 'Financial Relations with the EU' to be brought back to the Cabinet Committee in October 2019.