

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 13 November 2009.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mrs T Dean (Vice-Chairman), Mr R W Bayford, Mr D L Brazier, Mr R B Burgess, Mr J F London (Substitute for Mr J R Bullock, MBE), Mr S Manion (Substitute for Mr B R Cope), Mr R J Parry and Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute for Mr M V Snelling)

ALSO PRESENT: Miss S J Carey, Mr P B Carter, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr R A Marsh, Mr J D Simmonds, Mr B J Sweetland and Mr N Waterston

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Director of Personnel & Development), Mr D Cockburn (Executive Director, Strategy, Economic Development & ICT), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview)), Mr P Gilroy (Chief Executive), Mr R Hardy (Director of Improvement and Engagement), Ms J Hill (Performance Manager), Ms L McMullan (Director of Finance), Mrs T Oliver (Director of Strategic Development and Public Access), Mr D Oxlade (Head Of Policy), Mr D Shipton (Finance Strategy Manager) and Mr N Warren (Consumer Monitoring Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

25. Minutes - 25 September 2009

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the meeting held on 25 September 2009 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

26. Financial Monitoring Report : Corporate Services 2009/10

(Item B1)

(1) The Committee received the budget monitoring exception report, based on the monitoring returns for August, as reported to Cabinet on 12th October 2009.

(2) RESOLVED that the forecast budget variances for the Chief Executive's Department for 2009/10 based on the August exception monitoring report to Cabinet be noted.

27. Medium Term Financial Plan - 2010-11 to 2012-13 - consultation

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Shipton presented a report which identified the proposed strategy for determining next year's budget and the financial plans for the following two years. This included the latest indications of likely pressures facing the portfolios covering

the Chief Executive's Department, suggested areas for service improvements and the savings that may be needed in order to set a realistic three year budget plan.

(2) The Chairman reminded Members that this Committee had established an Informal Member Group to discuss the Medium Term Financial Plan in more detail and it would be meeting on 18 November 2009.

(3) Members questions and comments were invited and the responses to these included the following:-

- It was suggested that there should be discussions with the Districts in an attempt to achieve savings in future years on the cost of KCC elections.
- Ms McMullan explained that the best return was being achieved on money as it came off long term deposit by, for example, investing with counter parties who were guaranteed by Government.
- Mr Wild undertook to provide figures showing legal services' turnover.
- Regarding the £1m reduction in the Insurance Reserve as a one off saving for 2010/11, Ms McMullan confirmed that this, in her opinion, would leave an adequate amount in the Reserve,
- The issue of whether the saving in the Democratic Services budget would leave enough resources to support the localism agenda, which was resource intensive, was raised.

(4) RESOLVED that the establishment of an Informal Member Group on the Medium Term Plan and the discussion at the POSC meeting be noted.

28. KCC International Activities Annual Report 2008-09

(Item B3)

(1) Mr King, Mr Marsh and Mr Oxlade presented the fourth International Activities Annual report which highlighted examples of some of the main aspects of International work in KCC and the county over the past year. This year's report emphasised the increased focus of international activity on helping to support businesses and local people through the current downturn and how international work helped to drive innovation and creativity as part of the drive towards service transformation. The report also provided an overview of International work being undertaken across the Directorates of the County Council, including a 'scorecard' of EU funding successes to date.

(2) Members were invited to make comments and ask questions which included the following:-

- In response to a question on the perception that ports on the other side of the Channel had received more funding than Kent ports, Mr Oxlade explained that this was part perception and part fact. In order to secure funding it was necessary to put forward big proposals which to date Kent perhaps had not done ambitiously enough. However, he referred members to details of the recent funding success for the Port of Ramsgate.
- Mr Marsh confirmed that KCC worked well with its MEP's and one of the benefits of the Brussels Office was providing a meeting place for interested parties.

- The importance of finding out about best practise via KCC's international activities was raised. Reference was made to the visit by Kent Head Teachers to Virginia which had been funded by schools and facilitated by KCC. Also the possibility of learning from European counties regarding successes they have had in relating to their communities.
- Concern was expressed about the amount of European Funding that was allocated on a central or regional basis making the ability of local authorities to influence how the money was spent in their areas more difficult. Mr King pointed out that Kent's democratically accountable bodies were responsible for only a third of public sector spend in the area.

(3) RESOLVED that KCC's International Activities Annual Report 2008 – 09 and the comments made by Members be noted

29. East Kent Human Resources (HR) Partnership Shared Working update *(Item B4)*

(1) Mr Hardy introduced a report which updated the Committee on current progress on the work to create the East Kent Human Resources (HR) Partnership, and the possibility of expanded and ongoing shared work that this project created.

(2) Mrs Beer explained that the East Kent HR project brought together HR support to the 4 East Kent Districts. KCC had provided project officer support and general HR advice to the team who were leading the project and from early next year would be providing payroll services. The project had highlighted the complexity of implementation and decision making in relation to shared working. One of the advantages that had come from the project was the procurement of an HR IT system which will enable KCC to offer similar services to other organisations.

(3) In response to a question, Mrs Beer confirmed that it would be possible to have a different model whereby KCC provided services directly and not via the partnership if this was what Districts preferred. One of the advantages for Districts of having shared working was a resilience of service provision and improved value for money. In certain generic areas such as supplying advice on Employment law and policy there were potential savings for Districts. Also there was a benefit for Districts in having access to KCC's learning and development resources and well being services.

(4) Ms Beer stated that although there was an income stream from this for KCC this had not been the primary objective of providing these services in this instance.

(5) Mention was made of the East Kent Waste agreement which, when the initial capital investment had been recouped, would result in savings for both KCC and the Districts.

(6) It was noted that there would be a fuller report all the arrangements for shared services partnerships in Kent to the next meeting of the Committee.

(7) RESOLVED that the achievements made and the direction of this project be noted.

30. Connecting with Communities - Annual Report on KCC engagement activities.

(Item B5)

(1) Mr Hardy and Mrs Hill presented a report to update Members with developments regarding consultation, engagement and involvement within the authority from 1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009.

(2) Members highlighted the amount of work that Neighbourhood Forums and Local Boards were doing to engage with the public. Members gave examples of the different levels of success they had had with promoting consultations and engaging the public via Neighbourhood Forums etc. It was confirmed that Members were happy to promote consultations within their areas if the information was passed to them. The issue of how effective Neighbourhood Forums which covered large areas of population, for example those in Tunbridge and Malling, could be raised.

(3) The initiative by forty young people in care to establish a Children in Care Council was welcomed.

(4) It was suggested that there should be a report to the next meeting of the Committee on the work of the citizens panel, including questions, answers and setting out where we have used this information.

(5) Concern was expressed about the effectiveness of the recent Highway Services satisfaction survey carried out by consultants. Parish Councils and County Councillors had been invited to participate in this survey. The value of this survey was questioned due to the methods used. An update on this survey would be included in the next report on consultations to the Committee.

(6) Mrs Hill undertook to send a copy of the working with young people tool kit for Parish Councils would be sent to Members.

(7) RESOLVED that the contents of this report, its Appendices and the comments made by Members on how to raise greater awareness of planned activity be noted.

31. Total Place

(Item B7)

(1) Mr Gilroy introduced the item on Kent Total Place which was focused on improving services to the customer, reducing duplication and improving efficiency across the public sector. This was driven by the need for continued modernisation of public services and for public services to think more laterally about how to use physical and other assets. The report identified three key areas which were Gateways, Asset Management and the Margate Task Force.

(2) Mr Hardy emphasised that Total Place was not a pilot but was a phase in a programme that extended to 2016. What was being piloted was the willingness of central government and agencies to join with other public sector partners. He referred to the Members seminar on 16 December 2009 where Members would be shown the location of all public sector buildings across Kent.

(3) In response to a question on how Kent was chosen as an areas for Total Place, Mr Gilroy explained that this had resulted from discussions with Central Government departments about how Kent's Gateways could help them with public facing services.

(4) Regarding the timescale for this project, Mr Hardy stated that an initial submission had been sent to the Treasury on 18 September 2009 which outlined the potential of this way of working and the barriers both local and national. The next deadline was 5 February 2010 for submission of a fuller report outlining in detail the potential scope for savings, efficiencies and improvements in services to customers. He explained that KCC were working with lead districts in relation to the 3 elements, these were Tunbridge Wells for Gateways, Swale for Asset Management and Thanet for the Margate Task Force. Of these three the one area where Central Government had contributed the most was Asset Management, where its focus had been extended. The Committee asked to be kept informed of the submission to the Treasury on 5 February 2010.

(5) In relation to the Independent Chairman of the Asset Management Board, Central Government had helped to identify a national specialist in this area. Mr Lewis would be asked to give Members information on the Independent Chairman of the Assets Management Board and also inform them who the KCC representative was on the Board.

(6) In response to a question on the barriers to this programme, Mr Hardy stated that there was only one legislative barrier, Ms Oliver explained that from her experience with Gateways the barriers to this way of working were organisational cultures, silos and brands. Mr Hardy stated that it was hoped that by working with government official on Asset Management, where they were keen to engage, this could be used as a lever for Central Government involvement on the other two Boards.

(7) RESOLVED that the report and comments made by Members be noted.

32. The Review of Kent TV

(Item B9)

(1) The Chairman welcomed Mr Waterson from CapGemini who gave a power point presentation on the main findings of the review of Kent TV which he had undertaken on behalf of KCC. Details of this review were also circulated with the papers for the meeting. It was confirmed that this review was only one factor that would inform the final decision on the future of Kent TV.

(2) Members questions and comments were invited and the responses to these included the following:-

- Regarding governance arrangements for Kent TV, Mr Gilroy expressed the view that consideration could be given to looking at the governance arrangements of other public bodies such as the BBC, with maybe not having Elected Members on the Board but with them instead being part of an advisory group. He hoped that if a new contract was entered into for Kent TV then the governance arrangements would be reviewed.

- Ms Oliver confirmed that marketing for Kent TV formed part of the specification for the new contract.
- Ms Oliver referred to the work that was currently being undertaken to establish a schools channel on Kent TV. Reference was also made to the enthusiasm of Head Teachers at the Secondary Heads Conference for making use of Kent TV, and also the interest they had expressed in establishing a separate channel for Head Teachers.
- Regarding the timescale for the new contract, Ms Oliver informed the Committee that full specifications had been issued following an invitation for expressions of interest in August 2009. Tenders were due to be received on 1 December 2009. The current contract ended on 31 March 2010, therefore a decision was required on the contract before Christmas because there may be TUPE transfer issues or other staffing issues that required notice periods. Short listing and interviewing of successful tenders would take place in early December 2009. She stated that 24 expressions of interest had been received.
- In response to a question on which other stakeholders could have been engaged, Mr Waterson stated that although he had consulted Chambers of Commerce, with hindsight he would have liked to have consulted with some substantial Kent businesses.
- Mr Waterson expressed the view that Kent TV should make the leap to digital TV, which was a small step that could be achieved in the next year.
- A view was expressed that although there was an elaborate path to access Kent TV which affected its ease of use, it was ahead of its time and its content had improved.
- It was confirmed that Kent TV was linked to social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to whether it would be possible to have a facility for advertising for overseas ISP users only.
- The lack of feedback from members of the public was mentioned, and Mrs Oliver referred to the unsuccessful attempt that Kent TV had made to include two representatives from the public on the Board. She stated that Kent TV had got an email contact data base of viewers and at the County show had also obtained some feedback, there was the potential to use the citizens panel. She agreed that there was need to find a means to have a meaningful engagement with the public.
- Mrs Dean expressed the view that based on available viewing figures the potential of Kent TV had not been realised in the first 2 years of the project. She stated that the number of views was equal to the number of hits on "Explore Kent" which was only one part of KCC's website.
- In response to a comment that the amount of time that each viewer spent on Kent TV was decreasing, Mrs Oliver explained that there had been a change in the way that people viewed content on the internet.

- Mrs Dean acknowledged that there was a niche for community TV but that Kent would be better to host programmes.
- The need for the gap in local TV news to be filled was mentioned. Ms Oliver referred to the amount of local content on Kent TV.
- Mrs Dean reminded the Committee that it was originally intended that Kent TV would be self funded after 2 years. Ms Oliver explained that in relation to the original proposal to raise income from advertisements a decision had been taken by the Board not to do this. This had been a result of lobbying by local media.
- In response to a question on Webcasting, Mrs Oliver confirmed that this did form part of the Kent TV contract. The aim with the new contract was to provide something that was more creative and interesting for example having democratic highlights of the week.

(3) The Leader reminded the Committee that the decision on the future of Kent TV would be made before Christmas. He acknowledged the potential of Kent TV but stated that there were a number of issues that needed to be addressed including improved marketing. This was a form of community TV and the potential of getting other public bodies involved to help to support it needed to be fully explored.

(4) Mrs Oliver undertook to supply the viewing figures hits from abroad and also figure for Kent TV views on YouTube and Facebook.

(5) RESOLVED that the presentation on the review and the comments made by Members be noted.

33. KCC's Place Survey scores

(Item B8)

(1) Mr Warren gave a power point presentation on KCC's Place Survey scores. Mr Hardy referred to the report which set out the scores achieved in KCC's Place Survey and compares these with the national publication of scores made by CLG on 23 June and 23 September 2009.

(2) Mr Hardy explained that this survey did not ask people about their experience with services but about their perception of the area, which although important was not based on fact. This was one of a range of surveys and its only significance was its relationship to the National Indicator set which was currently under review

(3) In response to a question Mr Hardy confirmed that the report contained KCC face to face survey score, all other authorities had carried out a postal survey. All that it was possible to compare the results of the Kent survey with as the 2006 Best Value Performance Indicators survey.

(4) Mr Hardy confirmed that will feed into three of our National Indicator in our Local Area Agreement, these will be referred to in the Comprehensive Area Assessment, but this would only be one piece of evidence for the assessment.

(5) RESOLVED that KCC's Place Survey scores as produced by the Ipsos MORI face to face survey, the national comparison scores and the explanatory commentary be noted.

34. KCC Annual Complaints Report 2008/09

(Item B6)

(1) Mrs Hill presented a report which provided Members with overview information of the KCC's handling of complaints in 2008/09.

(2) RESOLVED that the report be noted and Member were invited to contact officers if they had any detailed questions.

35. Select Committees - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received an update report on the Select Committee topic review programme which was approved at the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 16 October 2009.

(2) RESOLVED that the topics to be included in the new Select Committee work programme be noted.