

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 28 October 2019.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Miss S J Carey, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr P J Oakford, Mr M D Payne, Mrs S Prendergast and Mr M Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of People and Communications), Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director Strategic & Corporate Services), Ms Z Cooke (Corporate Director of Finance), Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr M Dunkley CBE (Corporate Director for Children Young People and Education), Mr A Scott-Clark (Director of Public Health), Ms P Southern (Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health), Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

115. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2019

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2019 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

Miss Carey explained that, on 16 October, KCC had launched the annual budget consultation and this ran until 25 November. Miss Carey encouraged people to look at the budget consultation document and respond; the document provided an awareness of what KCC did. Responses to the consultation would demonstrate which services mattered to Kent residents and therefore when priorities were set the authority would know what mattered most to the people of Kent.

116. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring

(Item 5)

1. Mr Oakford presented this report which set out the monitoring position for the first 5 months of this financial year. Cabinet was asked to note the forecast pressure of £3.9million. Mr Oakford explained that the Children, Young People and Education directorate was forecasting a pressure of £6.3million.

2. It was important to note that the budget included £45million savings and Cabinet recognised the work done to date to achieve those savings despite the continued pressure. KCC was on target to achieve the savings.

3. Ms Cooke concurred that there was a significant pressure on the schools delegated budget, due to high needs placement costs.

4. The Leader confirmed with colleagues that the overall level of overspend on the budget was not out of line with this time in previous years.

5. Matt Dunkley explained that the pressures on CYPE were mainly within the Special Education Needs (SED) service and included the costs of placement, transport and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision to the high needs budget. There was also a pressure on the Asylum Service and a shortfall in funding to support Care Leavers. Mr Dunkley stated that in relation to transport costs it was important to acknowledge that this was due to the number and type of placements not the unit costs of transport itself; it was the number of journeys that were being commissioned.

6. Miss Carey commented on the good news of the £0.2million underspend from selling excess carbon reduction allowances for 2018-19. This meant more money was available for carbon reduction.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

i) **Note** the forecast revenue budget monitoring position for 2019-20 and capital budget monitoring position for 2019-20 to 2021-22, and that the forecast pressure on the revenue budget needs to be eliminated as we progress through the year.

ii) **Agree** that the underspend of £0.2m from selling our excess carbon reduction allowances for 2018-19 is transferred to a new Climate Change Target reserve to assist with accelerating our progress on climate change, with access to this reserve via a bid process.

iii) **Agree** the capital budget cash limit adjustments set out in section 6.4.

iv) **Note** the BRAG Update at Appendix 3

117. Cabinet Meetings - Future Thinking: Discussion (Item 6)

1. Ben Watts introduced this item which was intended to be an open discussion with an opportunity to exchange ideas about how Cabinet meetings could be run differently. Cabinet meeting agenda frequently featured one or two items including finance budget reporting, and one or two substantive items. When compared with Cabinet Agenda for other organisations this fell short. It was considered that KCC was perhaps not making the most of the opportunity at Cabinet meetings in bringing significant people together.

2. Mr Watts explained that items which featured on other authorities' Cabinet Agenda included the following:

- Leader's announcements including key policy and strategy
- Update from each Cabinet Member
- Announcements and advice from Officers on relevant issues
- Overview of consultations and decisions – present forthcoming consultations or feedback in relation to the outcomes.
- Monitor the delivery of the Capital Programme or receive strategy and vision papers.
- Equalities issues
- Items referred from Scrutiny Committee

- Final discussion of Key Decisions – in Kent arrangements were different because of the Cabinet Committee process. Whilst acknowledging that pre-scrutiny took place in Cabinet Committees there was still the opportunity for discussion at Cabinet on major decisions
- Petitions
- Outcomes in relation to the Member Fund.

3. Mr Oakford commented that there was an opportunity to make Cabinet more dynamic and to cover issues that the public might not be aware of.

4. Mr Long stated that he shared the commitment to transparency by KCC; however it was important to be conscious of the number of public meetings at which decisions were debated, made and scrutinised and to ensure that debates were not duplicated unhelpfully. It was considered important for member led decision making to stay strategic.

5. The Leader commented that consultations drew out public views and informed decision making, these should be treated transparently and discussing them at Cabinet would be a way of ensuring that this happened.

6. Mr Whiting welcomed a review of how Cabinet meetings may be constructed, openness was important, and it might be useful to take more decisions as full Cabinet, with the benefit of receiving views from cabinet colleagues. Mr Whiting suggested that Members and Officers consider allowing opposition leaders to make their points and involve them more fully in the formal Cabinet process.

7. The Leader confirmed that this suggestion would be examined and taken forward, in future scheduled meetings with the opposition group leaders; Mr Gough confirmed that he wanted to maximise genuine discussion.

8. Miss Carey considered that it was important to remember that KCC was a council of 81 members and that the Cabinet was a very small minority of its own group. She suggested that there were a number of other members who might want to be involved; however, Miss Carey stated that she didn't want to take away from the forums which already existed. Miss Carey liked the idea of an update from Cabinet Members, Senior Officers would also be able to give their input, and she concurred that this was an opportunity to do things differently.

9. The Leader explained that when he reviewed previous Cabinet agendas, they included regular items such as financial monitoring and select committee reports, and were otherwise mixed as to what did and didn't form part of the agenda.

10. Mr Hill supported the suggestion of allowing opposition group leaders to take part in proceedings. He also reminded Members that in the past local members were invited to Cabinet meetings to talk about a topic of their interest.

11. The Leader suggested that it was key to establish some criteria, it was important not to duplicate but it was necessary to make the meeting meaningful. It was hoped that the next meeting could be shaped in terms of this philosophy.

RESOLVED that Members and Officers consider ways in which to enhance the agenda for meetings of Cabinet.

118. Motion to Exclude the Press and Public

(Item 7)

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

119. Exempt Minute of the meeting held on 23 September 2019

(Item 8)

RESOLVED that the exempt minute of the meeting held on 23 September 2019 was a correct record and that it be signed by the Chairman.