

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

HEALTH REFORM AND PUBLIC HEALTH CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 11 March 2025.

PRESENT: Mrs L Game (Chair), Mr P Cole (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P T Cole, Ms K Constantine, Ms J Hawkins, Ms K Grehan, Mr A R Hills, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J Meade, Ms L Parfitt, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE and Ms L Wright

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D Watkins (Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health)

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr A Ghosh (Director of Public Health), Dr E Schwartz (Deputy Director Public Health), Mrs V Tovey (Assistant Director of Integrated Commissioning), Ms R Kulkarni-Johnston (Public Health Consultant), Ms C Nelson (Public Health Commissioner), Ms A Noake (Senior Commissioner), Ms A Ojo (Public Health Specialist), Ms D Smith (Public Health Specialist), Ms W Jeffreys (Consultant in Public Health), Mr C Beale (Senior Commissioner), Ms M Anthony (Commissioning and Development Manager), Ms J Bellingham (Locality Commissioner), Ms L Easterby (Risk and Delivery Assurance Officer), Ms R Eley (Senior Commissioner), Mr J Hickson (Analyst Manager - Surveys) and Ms G Humphreys (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

364. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies had been received from Mr Beaney and Ms Hamilton.

Ms Hawkins was in attendance virtually.

365. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the agenda
(Item 3)

1. Mr Cole declared that he was the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health for Sevenoaks District Council.

366. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2025
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

367. Verbal updates by Cabinet Member and Director
(Item 5)

1. Mr Watkins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, gave a verbal update on the following:
 - a. Mr Watkins shared KCC had been awarded a 5.4% increase for 2025/26 from the Government. There were challenges as a result of the budget, the Government had set an above inflation NHS pay award which affected the cost of delivery for NHS trust public health programmes. There was an increase in employers National Insurance and National Minimum Wage which had affected the cost base of the voluntary sector of public health services. Additionally, general inflation had increased to 3% which challenged the cost of delivering services.
 - b. Mr Watkins noted the Covid Day of Reflection, which marked five years since the beginning of the global pandemic, KCC had set up a digital memory wall to remember those affected by the pandemic.
 - c. National No Smoking Day was on 13th March 2025, the theme was 'Take Your Life Back'. KCC were offering free support methods such as guidance on the Allen-Carr method, Mr Watkins noted that Kent had 150,000 smokers.
 - d. Mr Watkins explained that KCC had launched a free 24/7 support for expectant and new parents, there was a confidential helpline and text service available.
 - e. The Baton of Hope tour was to come through Kent, Kent and Medway had extended the application time for baton bearers.
2. Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health, gave a verbal update on the following:
 - a. In reference to the Covid Day of Reflection, Dr Ghosh noted that public health was at the nationwide forefront of managing efforts to manage the pandemic. COVID-19 activity had decreased in the South East across all indicators. Hospital admissions for confirmed cases had decreased, which stood at 43% at the most recent peak, in September 2024.
 - b. Influenza cases had decreased, vaccinations in front line health care workers in South East stood at 40.9% which was higher than the national average. Respiratory Syncytial Viruses (RSV) had decreased amongst most indicators, vaccination coverage in the South East for those aged 75 to 79 years of age was the highest in the county at 55.9% which was higher than national average.
 - c. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) warned of the high levels of Norovirus and the possibility of a second wave due to various circulating genotypes. The largest impacts were seen in the health and social care settings, the reporting remained high nationally and among all age groups, the worst effected were those aged 65 and over. Newsletters were being circulated within Kent to care homes to reinforce the message of prevention against norovirus.

- d. Dr Ghosh was a keynote speaker at the UK Research Development National Summit which focused on how research innovation improvement could be done within local authorities.
 - e. A conference was to take place on the 22nd March 2025, which focused on alcohol related brain injuries. The conference aimed to bring clinicians from Kent together to work together for best practice.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
- a. Mr Watkins was to share the figure for how many baton bearers were still needed with Committee Members.
 - b. Dr Ghosh confirmed that the social media campaigns were having a positive impact on decreasing the number of norovirus cases.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates were noted.

368. Performance of Public Health Commissioned Services (Quarter 3 2024/2025)
(Item 6)

- 1. Ms Tovey introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.
- 2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. A Member questioned the plans to improve the red children's KPI. Ms Tovey explained that results were closely monitored, additionally the service were going to conduct an end of year review. Ms Eley added that each unclosed case was followed up by a manager.
 - b. A Member questioned whether breastfeeding was included in the health visiting service. Ms Jeffreys explained that breastfeeding pregnancy data was captured, it was not included within this data set but there was data, that could be shared with the Committee.

RESOLVED that the noted the performance of Public Health commissioned services in Quarter 3 2024/2025 and the proposed KPI target changes for 2025/2026.

369. Vaping Survey Report
(Item 7)

- 1. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston and Mr Hickson introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.
- 2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. A Member shared concerns about the unregulated sales of vapes. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston explained that there was work done with Trading Standards around illegal sale of vapes to young people in Kent, who had the authority to stop sales. There was proposed national legislation which would prevent the sale of disposable

vapes, which was to have a significant impact if passed. On the KCC website there was guidance for young people to address their concerns. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston explained that the majority of young people did not vape but levels were rising and the service was paying attention to this issue.

- b. When asked if there was any level of control over the chemical put in rechargeable vapes. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston explained that only the illegality of selling vapes to under age persons could be addressed. Officers had trained young volunteers in order to locate businesses selling vapes illegally, additionally, there were champions in communities who would inform corner shop staff of the illegality.
- c. Members requested that the Committee should receive regular updates on this issue.
- d. When asked if there was a consistent approach from school leaders to ensure their schools were smoke free spaces. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston explained that there was value in the concept, adding that letters were sent to schools detailing the highlights of the reports and schools would get the opportunity to respond.
- e. A Member raised the issue of children disposing of vapes before going into school. Mr Hickson shared that this observation aligned with data collected and outlined the next steps for the service following the results of the survey. Qualitative research in select schools was to take place, following the results of the survey, to get more information. Additionally, the survey was to be repeated following the implementation of legislation to ban disposable vapes.
- f. A Member raised concern surrounding the targeted advertising of vapes toward children and vulnerable individuals. Mr Hickson explained that there was a desire to do qualitative research in special schools in order to collect data.
- g. When asked about the research into influences of young people. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston explained that data suggested that young people were influenced to vape, further analysis would research into preventing negative influences. Mr Hickson added that data showed that vaping within young people was not about positive perception it was more about a desire to fit in socially. Dr Ghosh shared concerns about the rise in use of nicotine pouches, which was believed to be targeting children, highlighting the risk of attractive packaging and an assortment of flavours.
- h. A Member questioned what was the expectations of the schools that were part of survey and whether other testing environments could be used. Additionally, highlighting that only 33% of schools took part in the survey, a disproportionate representation of districts. Mr Hickson initiated research by asking schools how they believed it should be conducted. Results revealed that form time and PSHE lessons were the most appropriate period to conduct research. Mr Hickson added that just over 30 schools agreed to take part in the survey, there was under and over representation of districts and variations in levels of deprivation. Schools were provided with the

survey, there was not a significant amount of work for the schools to complete.

- i. A Member noted that a significant number of pupils from Sevenoaks attended school in different districts, so it was hoped a fair representation was provided.
- j. The Chair shared her concerns of over the top advertisement of vapes and social pressure between young people. Additionally, the Chair thanked the team for their report.
- k. Mr Watkins expressed his thanks to the team for the report, noting that he wanted to see further results brought to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the information contained within this report and commented on the survey and related work.

370. Risk Management: Health Reform and Public Health
(Item 8)

1. Dr Ghosh introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. The Committee discussed the risks present within the report and the risks that Kent faced.
 - b. A Member highlighted of the risk of contaminants within soil. Dr Ghosh shared that there was a division that dealt with that issue, noting that there were generic plans in place for every scenario.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and commented on the risks presented.

371. Public Health Service Transformation Programme Update
(Item 9)

1. Ms Tovey introduced the report and gave an overview of its content. It was highlighted that decisions on sexual health and NHS health checks had been delayed until the July meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the information contained within this update report and commented on the programme and the next steps.

372. 25/00008 Public Health Service Transformation Programme - Adult Lifestyle Services Recommission - Key Decision
(Item 10)

1. Ms Kulkarni Johnston and Mr Beale introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.

2. Mr Beale added a clarification to the report, that Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) also provided some lifestyle services to Dartford and Gravesend.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. A Member questioned why there were two separate strands of funding for the Weight Management and Healthy Lifestyles Services in East and West Kent. Mr Beale explained that KCHFT was used in East Kent, the agreement was coming to an end in 2026. The district and borough councils were used in West Kent, the service was to continue using this arrangement.
 - b. A Member asked whether any of the programmes offered injectable weight drugs. Ms Ojo explained that KCC only provided tier one and tier two weight management not injections, but the service did support appropriate weight management services for residents. Ms Kulkarni-Johnston added that weight loss injections had to be prescribed by clinicians after a check-up.
 - c. Dr Ghosh shared that there were 800,000 overweight and obese adults in Kent, the service saw 1,700 of those. There was a need for a whole system obesity approach, which was difficult to do but it was starting to gain traction. Mr Beale added that support was working well within districts councils and KCHFT, there was work being done to build upon work to see what will work for different districts and different people.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

373. 25/00011 Public Health Service Transformation Programme – Children Young People (CYP) 5 to 19 years Services Recommission - Key Decision
(Item 11)

1. Ms Jeffreys introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.
2. Ms Eley noted that due to market engagement and analysis there had been a revision to the paper, the financial implications were up to £12,8085 for a five year and five month contract, which had the possibility of a five year extension.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. Ms Jeffrey explained that that parent-infant mental health services development had taken place to ensure there was sufficient support for perinatal mental health. Probable mental health disorders was an NHS longitudinal study which began in 2017, the consistent question set provided a robust data set. Ms Eley added that any interventions would be needs led and individualised.
 - b. Ms Tovey shared that a new proposed model of therapeutic services was one part of the mental health and wellbeing support system for children and young people. Additional thought was going

into utilising family hubs to see young people, the focus was the young people being in an environment where they felt comfortable.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision as set out in the Proposed Record of Decision.

374. 25/00012 Family Hubs Start For Life – Parent Infant Mental Health Service - Extension - Key Decision
(Item 12)

1. Ms Jeffreys introduced the report and gave an overview of its content.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. A Member questioned whether decisions were being made with different authorities. Ms Tovey explained that the service was mindful, there was a strategic commissioning board within KCC which looked at the activity being delivered. There was a desire to collate an analysis, additionally, there had been engagement with multiple stakeholders internally and externally.

RESOLVED that the Committee considered and endorsed the proposed decision.

375. Work Programme
(Item 13)

1. The following items were noted for the work programme:
 - a. Regular updates to the vaping survey.
 - b. A report on the long term impact of access to technology on mental health.
 - c. The rising issue of damaging content on mobile phones.
 - d. The effect of artificial intelligence on mental health.
 - e. The progress of the Mental Health Bill.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the Work Programme.