

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 28th March, 2012

10.00 am

**Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**





AGENDA

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, 28th March, 2012, at 10.00
am
Darent Room, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone**

Ask for: **Peter Sass**
Telephone: **01622 694002**

Membership

Liberal Democrat (1): Mrs T Dean (Chairman)

Conservative (11): Mr R F Manning, Mr A R Chell, Mr D A Hirst, Mr E E C Hotson,
Mr M J Jarvis, Mr R E King, Mrs J P Law, Mr R L H Long, TD,
Mr M J Northey, Mr J E Scholes and Mr C P Smith

Labour (1) Mr G Cowan

Independent (1) Mr R J Lees

Church Dr A Bamford, The Reverend N Genders and Mr A Tear

Representatives (3):

Parent Governor (2): Mr B Critchley and Mr P Myers

Refreshments will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting

Timing of items as shown below is approximate and subject to change.

County Councillors who are not Members of the Committee but who wish to ask questions at the meeting are asked to notify the Chairman of their questions in advance.

Webcasting Notice

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By entering the meeting room you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you do not wish to have your image captured then you should make the Clerk of the meeting aware.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

A. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- A1 Introduction/Webcasting
- A2 Substitutes
- A3 Declarations of Interests by Members in Items on the Agenda for this Meeting
- A4 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2011 (Pages 1 - 8)
- A5 Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2012 (Pages 9 - 14)
- A6 Follow-up Items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee (Pages 15 - 26)
- A7 Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 18 January 2012 (Pages 27 - 28)
- A8 Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 14 March 2012 (Pages 29 - 30)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694002

Tuesday, 20 March 2012

Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 13 December 2011.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr G Cowan, Mr R F Manning, Mr R J Lees, Mr A R Chell, Mr D A Hirst, Mr M J Jarvis, Mrs J P Law, Mr M J Northey, Mr C P Smith, Mr R E Brookbank (Substitute for Mr R E King) and Mrs S V Hohler (Substitute for Mr E E C Hotson)

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs J Whittle and Mrs A D Allen

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Ireland (Corporate Director, Families and Social Care), Mr P Brightwell (Performance and Quality Assurance Manager, LAC), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview)) and Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2011

(Item A4)

- (1) Referring to paragraph 30 (1) the Chairman informed Members that a group had met to discuss the Performance Management Framework and that this would be reported to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees to give all Members the opportunity to discuss the Framework.
- (2) RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2011 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

34. Follow-up Items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

(Item A5)

- (1) Members had received a briefing note on Highway Drainage Cleansing, however they were unaware how many gullies were in the county. Mrs Law requested that an issue she raised relating to the sharing of gully space with utility companies be followed up.
- (2) RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee note the follow-up items report.

35. Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 15 September

(Item A6)

- (1) RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee approve the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 15 September 2011.

36. Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 14 October
(Item A7)

- (1) RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee approve the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 14 October 2011.

37. Notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 2 December - to follow
(Item A8)

- (1) RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee approve the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 2 December 2011.

38. Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy (Cabinet report attached)
(Item C1)

- (1) The Chairman welcomed Mr Andrew Ireland to his first meeting of Cabinet Scrutiny having recently joined the authority.
- (2) The witnesses were asked what they thought of Mr Narey's (the former Chief Executive Officer of Barnardo's) comments in response to a question about the social background to Looked After Children (LAC) and that by dealing appropriately with LAC that the number of new cases, and therefore the pressure on the budget, would decrease. Mr Narey had previously commented that trends were actually going in the opposite direction, and that in the future more children might become LAC.
- (3) Mr Ireland explained that he understood Mr Narey's remarks in relation to the need to intervene earlier with young children, and that in his opinion and experience this was right. There was an issue for Local Authorities with older children, particularly following the Southwark judgement [which made councils responsible for the health needs and well-being of homeless 16 and 17 year olds.] It was considered that there were often poor outcomes resulting from the care experience for adolescents. There were increased pressures surrounding older children, their education has often been disrupted and this could prove to be more challenging, it was considered important to draw distinctions around particular scenarios.
- (4) Mrs Whittle explained that it was essential to get early intervention right, particularly where it was highly unlikely that the children would be reunited with their parents.
- (5) Mr Brightwell referred to the 2006 Care Matters document which predicted that the population of Looked After Children would reduce but that it would be more needy and vulnerable. It wasn't the aim to prevent children from becoming looked after if they needed to be but children were sometimes staying in the system for much longer than necessary at present.
- (6) In 2001 Kent published its first big strategy to reduce the numbers of looked after children. The new strategy (2011 to 2015) focussed on reducing the average

length of time children needed to be looked after. Based on current looked after children numbers, a reduction in one month would show as a reduction of 100 children on the LAC register. It was perhaps the case that in 2001 the authority had prevented children entering the care system when they needed to and that had created a bottleneck in the system that has contributed to an increase in looked after children numbers since 2008. It was necessary to develop high quality services to support children, not to prevent them entering the system when they needed to.

- (7) Mr Brightwell explained that the multi-agency strategy was drawn up following the criticism from Ofsted.
- (8) Members queried how funding was going to reduce the numbers of LAC. For foster children the ultimate aim was to reunite them with their families, although it was accepted that there were times when this was not possible. In the current economic times there were increased pressures on families, how would the numbers of LAC be reduced under such circumstances? In addition to this Kent suffered with children entering Kent's care system from London Boroughs.
- (9) Mrs Whittle explained that the family support service had been hugely successful in intervening with families on the brink of breakdown, however in 2008 this service stopped and there was a correlation between the service ending and an increase in Looked After Children. There were 400 more children in local authority care than there were 3 years ago, some authorities, such as Lincolnshire, had seen their numbers of LAC decline and officers were looking at best practice at other authorities. It was accepted that it was a mistake to end the family support service which was perhaps taken for granted at the time when services were merging. It was clear that the best performing authorities recognised the value of early intervention.
- (10) Mr Brightwell explained that a comprehensive study by Biehal et al (2005) was done in York which compared, over a number of years, different approaches and services available to teenagers. It showed the importance of specialist preventative services for teenagers. The Local Authorities with specialist services were 20-25% more effective at preventing teenagers entering long term care than those which relied on generic services.
- (11) Members discussed the difficult relationship between the economy and LAC numbers. Kent had an extremely diverse LAC population which included children looked after by KCC, placements by KCC and then unaccompanied asylum seekers. There were areas of high deprivation and high affluence; there was a need for consistency whilst reflecting district variations.
- (12) It was important to reduce drift, and reduce the length of time LAC spent getting through the court system which at present was unacceptable. Reducing drift would have a huge impact on the numbers of children in the system. There was a need for a more constructive relationship with the courts and officers had met recently and set up a working party between the relevant agencies with an aim to:
 1. reduce delays within the court system, figures of 80 weeks were quoted in some cases which was unacceptable,

2. focus on improving the quality of assessments to the courts
3. reduce the number of expert assessments provided, assessments should be streamlined and be of high quality explaining why children should be brought into care

Officers were confident that it would be possible to streamline the process and meet the needs of the court whilst improving the system for the children involved.

- (13) It was important to remember that one size doesn't fit all, there were concerns about the 20mile radius and Kent receiving children from the London Boroughs into the care system. The numbers of children coming to Kent from London had increased from 18months ago. Children was also placed outside of Kent however, for reasons such as adoption, relatives, KCC carers in Medway, specialist accommodation that could not be provided in Kent. Officers would look at whether specialist accommodation could be provided in Kent to prevent some children having to leave the County.
- (14) Members queried whether head teachers could legally refuse to take LAC. A clear position would be sought in relation to the admission criteria of schools. There was a legal and moral responsibility for local authorities not to place children in places where there would be resourcing difficulties and a lack of facilities. There was also a legal duty on the authorities to only place a child outside of the local authority area if it was in the child's interest. KCC had been proactive in raising the profile of this issue. Members queried what else could be done to prevent non-compliance with the legal duty.
- (15) Members had a responsibility to raise any concerns with the placing authority or the Government, it was feasible to ask why a child was being placed in a particular area and how conducive the placing was for the core plan for the child. It was important to work with the London Boroughs and to seek practice from authorities such as Isle of Wight, Plymouth, Staffordshire which had similar problems with children being placed from other areas.
- (16) The witnesses were questioned on their budget and whether pressures were built into the base budget with such a demand driven service with uncertainties about the future. There were pressures within the service relating to unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and the Southwark judgement presented further pressures for the authority. The Directorate had looked at social worker packages as it was essential to tackle the large vacancy rate. Increasing the remuneration of social workers to improve retention placed a pressure on the budget. Significant funding had been put into the budget to 'fix' the service. The unit cost per LAC was low at £27,000 in comparison to the average national figure of £36,000 however there were too many children in the system.
- (17) There would be a drive in spring 2012 to recruit KCC foster carers in the areas of shortfall, as there continued to be significant numbers of children being placed a significant distance away although within the county, due to the lack of more local foster carers.
- (18) Members commended the inclusion of the young people's comments in the strategy and considered that a further point should be added to the strategy to

enable children to participate in their own planning. There should also be a focus on parenting skills to stop the cycle of LAC. The prevention strategy which was currently in draft form would pick up the comments Members had raised.

- (19) There was a discussion around the effect of alcohol on families, and it was important to ascertain the factors behind the child coming into care. There should be more cross referencing with Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team as this may enable earlier intervention with the parents. Members were reassured that all aspects of the child's circumstances were taken into account but this was not always aggregated to draw the statistics out. Drug and Alcohol issues featured strongly in many Serious Case Reviews. Officers would look at how the statistics could be brought together to show the influence of drugs and alcohol more clearly. Members considered that further work was needed on the balance of budgets relating to drugs and alcohol.
- (20) Members referred to page 9 of the strategy and under what circumstances would a school not know that they had LAC. Under the duties within S.52 of Children Act 2004 all schools were required to have a teacher with knowledge of the LAC in their school, who the responsible authority was and who the carer was. Corporate parents should be ensuring that schools had a designated teacher, determining arrangements Kent had made for notification when children placed outside of the local authority area and talking to schools in case there were difficulties with notification. If the placing authority fulfils all the statutory duties the system was foolproof, if there were failures the child could remain unknown for a period of time. 10 years ago there was a lack of knowledge about LAC, at present the pastoral support was very good and staff were focussed on supporting LAC.
- (21) Mr Cowan referred to his own experience as a KCC foster carer and stated that the support provided by KCC's fostering service and their liaison with schools in information sharing on looked after children was outstanding.
- (22) Referring to page 11 of the strategy Members considered that any child experiencing 56 placements in their time in care was totally unacceptable. The situation had improved however, and it was necessary for some children to move placements, but there was a need to increase the placement choice, 260 more placements were needed to be able to offer a significant placement choice. There was a need to make fostering more attractive. Kent had a diverse group of children; some were looked after for just a day, others for the whole of their childhood.
- (23) Members discussed the homelessness protocol; Kent was one of the first local authorities to establish protocols with the district housing authorities. It was clear that it was essential to work together on the placement strategy.
- (24) There was a discussion around permanently looked after children and what this meant for the families and the children. Mr Brightwell explained that when it was agreed that a child should remain in a placement until 18 years this was considered a permanency placement which gave children a greater sense of stability.
1. subjective permanency – where child has a sense of belonging
 2. legal permanency – legally adopted or special guardianship

3. concrete permanency - where professionals recognise that child is in permanent home

Further information would be provided on the options available to LAC and their carers. No-one was forcing the young people or their carers to enter into permanent arrangements, but for some families it was the preferred option.

- (25) There was a need to be led by the needs of the young people; if distance learning would best meet the needs of the child then the authorities should be doing all in their power to facilitate that.
- (26) Members asked about the flow of information, it was considered that in the past problems had been partly due to an inadequate flow of information. The witnesses explained that the improvement plan had been useful and had put the challenge back in the system. Regarding LAC specifically there was a need for more information and for this to go further. There was a balance between safeguarding and LAC data and was important in relation to phase 2 of the plan. The performance data had enabled the challenge of District Managers.
- (27) The Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel was in attendance and stated that she found the debate extremely informative and was heartened by Members interest in the Corporate Parenting role. The role was evolving and gathering momentum well and should be included in the Member induction process.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee:

- (28) Thank Mrs Whittle, Mr Ireland and Mr Brightwell for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions. Members considered that there had been an excellent debate and were reassured by the discussion had with the witnesses.
- (29) A bullet point should be added to page 10 of the strategy regarding the importance of listening to the Looked After Children and how, as Corporate Parents, Members can facilitate this.
- (30) The addition of a bullet point on page 11 of the strategy mentioning alcohol or confirmation that alcohol is included within the 'substance misuse' reference on that page
- (31) Look at examining the link with Kent Drugs and Alcohol Action Team possibly as part of the prevention strategy.
- (32) Further details to be provided about the bullet points on page 11 of the strategy.
 1. 'The average number of placements that our looked after children experience during their time in care' and
 2. 'The average length of time that a child/young person is looked after before achieving permanence or leaving care'Why the range of figures is so high and what can be done to tackle these figures.
- (33) The inclusion of targets regarding number of placements per child within the strategy and clarification of those targets.

- (34) Clarity should be provided for carers in relation to permanently Looked After Children and special guardianship possibly via workshops.
- (35) Explore distance learning for Looked After Children, possibly via the virtual school or other means.
- (36) Clarification should be sought regarding the admissions criteria for schools and the situation regarding prioritisation of looked after children within that criteria.
- (37) Independent Reviewing Officers should consider challenging their counterparts in placing authorities regarding the appropriateness of placing looked after children in Kent
- (38) Identify other local authorities who have similar problems regarding looked after children being placed within their boundary and working with them to find a solution.
- (39) Write to London Boroughs to encourage them to work with each other to use vacant places in their boroughs to place Looked After Children.
- (40) Write to Mr Loughton to encourage him to enforce local authorities who place children more than 20 miles from their home (the 20mile limit) – include statistics separating the number of asylum seeking children in Kent and the number of Looked After Children placed by other local authorities in Kent.
- (41) Provide Members with details of the successor bodies to the Kent Improvement Board and Children's Services Improvement Panel to ensure Members continue to be part of the chain receiving information.

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 23 January 2012.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr G Cowan, Mr A R Chell, Mr D A Hirst, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr M J Jarvis, Mr R E King, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr M J Northey, Mr J E Scholes and Mr C P Smith

PARENT GOVERNORS: Mr P Myers

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A J King, MBE, Mr J D Simmonds, Ms S J Carey and Mr L Christie

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Acting Head of Financial Strategy), Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mr K Abbott (Finance Business Partner, ELS Directorate) and Mr A Webb (Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

39. Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 - 2015 *(Item 4)*

Mr A King, MBE, Deputy Leader of the Council, Mr J Simmonds, Cabinet Member for Finance and Business Support, Miss S Carey, Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Business Support, Mr A Wood, Corporate Director of Finance & Procurement, Mr D Shipton, Acting Head of Financial Strategy and Mr K Abbott, Director, School Resources were present for this item.

(1) Mr Wood introduced the Cabinet Budget 2012/13 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/15 Report. He thanked District colleagues for making information available on their Council Tax base and Collection Funds earlier to enable the draft report for Cabinet to be published before the end of January; in previous years Cabinet had met to discuss the Budget in February. This also meant that the draft Cabinet report had been made available for scrutiny by the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee for the first time.

(2) Mr Wood went on to draw Members' attention to the following points:

- The Early Intervention Grant had increased by £1.724m compared to the original indicative figure. The increased grant was intended to fund the Government's pledge to increase the number of free places for 2 year olds but was un-ring-fenced. The revised proposed budget identified additional estimated spend of £0.86m on places for 2 year old placements in 2012/13, leaving a balance of £0.864m for other purposes.
- That consultation on the Budget had been undertaken with Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees, trade unions, business and the public.

- That the notified tax base had increased by 0.74% (corresponding to an additional £2.6m compared to the estimate included the draft Budget) despite the reported slow down in the housing market.
- Referring to Table 6.3, an additional £2.2m was expected from the net surplus in District Council collection funds. He confirmed that it was usual for a small surplus to be identified but this had to be treated as one-off funding for the forthcoming budget and cannot be factored in base on-going funding.
- Referring to Table 7.6, there had been a number of changes to emerging pressures since the release of the draft Budget, resulting in the figure being revised from £9.1m to £7.6m.
- This £7.6m, combined with the collection fund surplus of £2.2m, meant there was nearly £10m available to be allocated and Section 8 of the report set out proposals for how it would be used in 2012/13.
- In the Capital programme, £49m had come off the Education, Learning and Skills 3 year programme due to changes in Government grants and academy conversions. He emphasised that £33m corresponded to the estimated conversion to academies during the forthcoming MTFP period and this money would be controlled by individual academies rather than the local authority.
- That it was recommended that Council Tax remained frozen for 2012/13, which would make Kent eligible for the Government's Council Tax Freeze Grant.

(3) Mr Simmonds explained that Cabinet Members had thought about the options regarding Council Tax in detail, and were conscious that the £14.4m from Government was only going to be a 'one off'. Cabinet members were also aware that not increasing Council Tax means income would be forgone each year but the recommended option was to accept the grant from Government. Of the £10m still in the Budget to be used, Mr Simmonds explained that £7.5m would be put into a Council Tax equalisation reserve to smooth the effect of the one-off grant over the medium term with the remaining £2m put into an Invest to Save reserve to stimulate significant and sustainable savings in future years' budgets.

(4) On future years of the Government settlement, Mr Simmonds explained that Government had been true to its word in the 2012/13 settlement, but that he was being cautious beyond that. Mr Wood referred to Appendix A of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which identified reductions in Formula Grant of £9m in 2013/14 and £22m in 2014/15. This reflected the overall reductions for Local Government in the Spending Review projections, but there was a risk that councils could be asked to find further savings. He emphasised that the MTFP does not present the worst case scenario

(5) On the effects of the academy programme on the Council Budget, Mr Abbott explained that officers were working through estimates of the effect of the conversion of schools during the current financial year and predicted conversions during 2012/13 and this would be available within four weeks. Regarding discussions about making the formula used for the Dedicated Schools Grant fairer, Mr Abbott explained that the outcome of the consultation in the Autumn was due to be published later in the year. He also reminded members that the Government had launched a four week just before Christmas on the specific issue of local authority central functions, but there would be no changes until April 2013 at the earliest.

(6) Regarding the Early Intervention Grant (EIG), Mr Shipton explained that since notification of the un-ring-fenced grant for 2011/12 was received so late there was little choice other than to allocate funding to the services which had previously received specific grants (albeit reduced to reflect reduced overall allocation).. For 2012/13, it was intended that the grant income would be treated like any other un-ring-fenced grant, i.e. as general income to the whole Council, with the monies sitting in the Finance portfolio rather than as grant income in individual portfolios/services.

(7) Responding to a question on where financial responsibility for failed academies would lie, Mr Abbott explained that it would sit first and foremost with the trust set up to administer each academy. There was currently no statutory provision for academies to be able to be returned to Council control, nor any requirement for the Council to be involved, but the Secretary of State may look to another trust to take over. Although there would be no direct consequences for the Council, there may be an indirect effect if parents decided to transfer their children from failing academies into local authority maintained schools.

(8) On the impact of a reduction in Council Tax Benefit, Mr Shipton explained that it was too early to identify all the implications, but the biggest risk to the County Council would be if the benefit became converted into a Council Tax discount, since 70% of the Council Tax base came to the County Council. An initial meeting was scheduled for the following week with District Councils to discuss how they might implement the localisation of Council Tax Benefit.

(9) Referring to paragraph 6.4 of the Cabinet report, Mrs Dean explained that she had met with Andrew Stunell, who had welcomed any evidence which suggested that top tier Councils should receive a higher proportion of the New Homes Bonus. Mr Shipton stated that Kent's response to last year's consultation had put forward the case that the 80/20 split did not represent the respective level of spending by local councils on providing services although there has been no specific research on how much is spent supporting new housing. Miss Carey referred to the letter written to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 17 January 2012 raising this issue.

(10) There was a detailed discussion about the recommendation to freeze Council Tax and to accept the grant from Government. Mr Wood explained the two 'extreme' scenarios of the possible options as follows:

1. If the authority had planned to increase Council Tax by the maximum amount without triggering a referendum (3.5%), it would add £20m onto the tax base each year, equating to £100m over five years. Taking the grant and freezing the Council Tax would only compensate for the loss of income in 2012/13
2. on the other if the council had been planning for no increase then taking up the grant from Government would in effect be a one-off bonus in 2012/13 and the impact on services from freezing Council Tax would already be identified in the MTFP either by future increases or reduced services.

Since the published MTFP for 2011/13 had no specific increase planned KCC was closer to the second scenario. Mr Simmonds added that in the current difficult economic climate, the Council would do everything to avoid asking households to pay more Council Tax. Under the Council Tax equalisation proposals the grant would be

invested to help reduce demand for services (and therefore savings to compensate for the tax income forgone) in future years.

(11) Members expressed a number of views, including that:

- There was a danger that elections might encourage Government to keep proposing the same measure in future, but may result in a greater level of budget cuts after the election.
- There was an awareness of the difficult economic climate for households, and that previous thinking was nearer a 0% rather than a 3.5% increase in any case.
- It was recognised that it was only a one-off sum, and that it would be used to manage demand as well as existing pressures.
- One-off grants were not sustainable and accepting the grant might result in having to find greater savings later.
- In respect of the effect on services, circumstances were changing and that in future the model of Councils and the way services would be provided may be different.
- That if the £14m was definitely going to be used to manage future demands and Cabinet did things differently, the recommendation to accept the grant would be more reassuring.

(12) Mr Wood explained that he saw the grant as a grant to the people of Kent, and to not accept it could be seen as going to ask households to pay for something which the Government had instead offered to fund. He also pointed out the importance of seeing the £14m grant in the context of the Council's annual spend of £900m. Half of the grant would be going into the Council Tax equalisation reserve, and it was important to remember the other measures being taken to balance overall pressures in the Budget.

(13) There was a brief discussion about the difference between the new £2m Invest to Save Reserve and other invest-to-save initiatives, as well as the various reserves referred to in the Statement of Accounts.

(14) Regarding the proposed additional spending of £1m on the Procurement team, Mr Wood explained that within the Budget and MTFP, a target of £20m savings had already been set to be delivered through better procurement although no resources had been identified how this would be achieved. The £1m spent recruiting the team to deliver these savings, effectively meaning the savings target had been increased to £21m. Mr Simmonds added that approximately 50% of KCC procurement was with Kent businesses and there was potential for this to increase to over 60%.

(15) On the pressure which had arisen in Specialist Children's Services, and the question of when the demand for Looked after Children (LAC) placements would fall, Mr Simmonds felt that the costs of rectifying the situation had been necessary as demand for placements had increased beyond the level upon which forecasts were based. He identified that the pressures for a council like Kent were more difficult than other authorities due to the very large proportion of LAC placed in Kent by other authorities and the impact this has on the local care providers.

(16) On the pressure around unaccompanied asylum seekers, and how this could be resolved, Mr Simmonds explained that Kent continued to have discussions with

Government, and that it was necessary to have a 'meeting of minds' to resolve the issue. Mr Abbott explained that the situation arose due to conflicting interpretations of immigration legislation by the Home Office and a council's responsibilities under the Children Act as identified by the Department of Education and the Council's lawyers.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee:

(17) Thank Mr King, Mr Simmonds, Miss Carey, Mr Wood, Mr Shipton and Mr Abbott for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

(18) Ask that the Director of School Resources provide a breakdown of the financial effects on the Council of the transferral of schools to academy status, when it has been completed.

(19) Ask that the Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement provide a briefing note on how un-ring-fenced grants, such as the Early Intervention Grant, were now being administered within the authority, and how this related to the additional monies being made available for Youth Services commissioning.

(20) Ask that the Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement provide full details of the financial reserves held by the County Council.

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By: Peter Sass - Head of Democratic Services

To: Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – 28 March 2012

Subject: Follow up items and Decisions from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee –
13 December 2011 and 23 January 2012

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out the decisions from the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and items which the Committee has raised previously for follow up

Introduction

1. This is a rolling schedule of information requested previously by the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.
2. If the information supplied is satisfactory it will be removed following the meeting, but if the Committee should find the information to be unsatisfactory it will remain on the schedule with a request for further information.
3. The decisions from the meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on 13 December 2011 and 23 January 2012 are set out in the table below along with the response of the relevant Cabinet Member.

Recommendation

4. That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee notes the responses to the issues raised previously.

Contact: Peter Sass
peter.sass@kent.gov.uk

01622 694002

Background Information: *Nil*

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1. Follow up items of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 1

Follow-up items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – Tracking sheet				13 January 2012
Item	Date of meeting	Recommendation	Status	Notes
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	1	To note only	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	2	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	3	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	4	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	5	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	6	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	7	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	8	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	9	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	10	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	11	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	12	To be actioned	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	13	Letter written, reply received and circulated to Members of CSC 10 January 2012	
Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy	13/12/2011	14	RESPONSE RECEIVED	
Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 – 2015	23/01/2012	1	To note only	
Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 – 2015	23/01/2012	2	To be actioned	in order to estimate accurately the cost of the academies programme to Kent in 2012-13 the information will be

				dependent on the completion of the Section 251 return (LA statutory return that provides details of school budgets for 2012-13) which provides the detail to calculate the cost incurred to Kent. This piece of work needs a considerable resource committed to it and we are aiming to complete this by the second week in April, on completion of this piece of work the intention will be to provide the required information by the end of April.
Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 – 2015	23/01/2012	3	Information circulated	
Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 – 2015	23/01/2012	4	Information circulated	

1. Follow up items of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

Kent's Multi-Agency Looked After Children Strategy (13 December 2011)

Cabinet portfolio: Mrs J Whittle

Synopsis: The report presented the draft Looked After Children Strategy.

Reason for call-in: Members wished to examine the deliverability of the Looked After Children Strategy, in particular:

- (a) The reduction of numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) and how will this be achieved
- (b) Placements of LAC by KCC outside of Kent and the circumstances surrounding these placements
- (c) The movement towards Permanently Looked After Children (PLAC)
- (d) In relation to the Reduction in Volumes referred to in the Children's Services Improvement Plan - Quarterly Update, the fact that there has been no reduction in LAC (despite a reduction in all other indicators)
- (e) How the £19.8million to be spent on Children's Social Services in 2012/13 (as referred to in the Autumn Budget Statement) will be allocated

Recommendations and responses:

- 1. Thank Mrs Whittle, Mr Ireland and Mr Brightwell for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions. Members considered that there had been an excellent debate and were reassured by the discussion had with the witnesses**
- 2. A bullet point should be added to page 10 of the strategy regarding the importance of listening to the Looked After Children and how, as Corporate Parents, Members can facilitate this.**

Agreed by Cabinet Member; Paul Brightwell to action.

The following sentence has been added as a bullet point to the strategy document:

"The extent to which children and young people are involved in their review meetings and decisions made about them, and also contributing their views in a way that influences the development and improvement of services and practice to looked after children and care leavers."

- 3. The addition of a bullet point on page 11 of the strategy mentioning alcohol or confirmation that alcohol is included within the 'substance misuse' reference on that page.**

Agreed by Cabinet Member; Paul Brightwell to action.

The cabinet scrutiny recommendation refers to the addition of a bullet point under the section 'Where we are' on page 11 relating to the % of looked after children involved

in alcohol or substance misuse. It has not been possible to provide reliable data on this issue at this time, although regular monitoring of alcohol and substance misuse of our looked after children will be included in the performance information provided for Kent's Corporate Parenting Group. MIU will assess the statistical data is available that could be added in this section of the strategy. Reference to 'alcohol' is now also made on page 25 of the strategy which initially only mentioned substance misuse. The extent of drug and alcohol use (including nicotine) forms part of the annual health assessment which is provided to the majority of look after children and care leavers. Some older young people sometimes refuse the assessment. However the assessments provide another route by which data can be potentially be captured.

4. Look at examining the link with Kent Drugs and Alcohol Action Team possibly as part of the prevention strategy.

Agreed by Cabinet Member; Paul Brightwell to action.

The recommendation of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee has been passed to those officers in the authority responsible for the development of the preventative strategy in order for them to consider. KDAAT were involved in the initial development of the preventative strategy and will also be involved in a further review of this strategy which is planned, although it is not possible to confirm exactly when the review will begin.

5. Further details to be provided about the bullet points on page 11 of the strategy:

- 'The average number of placements that our looked after children experience during their time in care' and
- 'The average length of time that a child/young person is looked after before achieving permanence or leaving care'

Paul Brightwell to provide information to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Parenting Panel why the range of figures is so high and what can be done to tackle these figures.

Placements

With respect to average number of placements that our looked after children experience, work by the management information unit has confirmed that this represents a mean of 2.5 placements (rather than 3.4 referred to in the strategy document presented to cabinet scrutiny) with a median of 2 placements. The median figure is included because the number of placements our children/young people experience is heavily skewed, with the majority only experiencing 1 (596 children) or 2 placements (555 children). The median is generally considered to be a more accurate measure of central tendency when looking at statistical distribution curves that are skewed.

The statistical data within the looked after children strategy (page 11) regarding placements will be amended to reflect the revised data.

Length of time looked after

A recent analysis of the LAC data (March 2010 to June 2011) suggests a change in trend, where the average (median) has been steadily falling (from 755 days in March 2010 to 608 days in June 2011). While this suggests a reduction in the average length of time looked after, this is more likely to be due to the increase in numbers of children and young people becoming looked after since 2009.

6. The inclusion of targets regarding number of placements per child within the strategy and clarification of those targets.

Paul Brightwell to explore

The National Indicator set already include two specific targets on placement stability NI 62 and 63, which are reported on each year to government under the SSDA903 return. These are:

NI62 refers to the proportion of looked after children experiencing 3 or more placement moves. Kent County Council's performance on this measure for 2010/11 was 8%, which was better than the national average of 10.7%

NI63 focuses on the proportion of looked after children who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption and their adoptive placement together with their previous placement together last for at least 2 years. For 2010/11 Kent County Council's performance on this measure was at 71.5%, which is above the national average of 68.6%

These performance figures are not included in the demographic data used in the looked after strategy, although they are published by Government each year.

7. Clarity should be provided for carers in relation to permanently looked after children and special guardianship possibly via workshops.

Paul Brightwell to action

The local authority's permanence policy / guidance provide detailed information to social workers with respect to this area of practice and decision-making.

The re-introduction of the Staying Together initiative is in the process of being considered by senior management teams within FSC and a paper on the scheme is to be tabled at FSC DMT on 4th April. A report outlining the scheme, including the financial implications is also to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 19th April.

Once a final decision has been made on whether to re-introduce the Staying Together initiative workshops for social workers and carers will be organised which are expected to take place during spring and early summer.

8. Explore distance learning for looked after children, possibly via the virtual school or other means.

Tony Doran to explore and report back to Corporate Parenting Panel

The following information has been provided by Tony Doran – Headteacher of VSK:

Distance learning packages historically have been delivered via Simon Fox's Alt Curriculum Team where they used Accipio (www.accipio-learning.co.uk/index.html) Very few of our looked after children have ever accessed this and it was all administered via the Attendance and Behaviour Service 9ABS).

I have requested that my deputies look into the levels of need for distance learning and products available for providing this. In addition to Accipio we have looked at EdLounge and FLEET who have a distance learning package that charges by the 1/4 hr.

VSK current thinking is that there is a very small cohort who could benefit from a full time distance learning package but a significant that would benefit from this kind of resource as part a package of school based/home based support offer facilitated package. The ability to secure these packages will be dependent on establishing sufficient funding from sources previously held under alternative curriculum within the Attendance and Behaviour Service.

9. Clarification should be sought regarding the admissions criteria for schools and the situation regarding prioritisation of looked after children within that criteria.

Paul Brightwell to discuss with Tony Doran and report back to Cabinet Scrutiny.

In response to this recommendation, Tony Doran (Headteacher VSK) asked that the following issues be brought to cabinet Scrutiny's attention.

The School Admissions code (2010), paragraph 2.9 and 2.10 refer to the vulnerability of looked after children and reinforce the need for schools to give priority to looked after children so that a school place is found for these children and young people as quickly as possible. The school code also gives specific powers to local authorities (paragraphs 3.35 to 3.37) to direct schools to take looked after children. There is a new Code currently out for consultation and looked after children still remains the highest priority within this. The relevant sections of the current code are outlined below:

Paragraph 2.9 Children in care are among the most vulnerable children in society and it is of paramount importance that a school place is found that is in the best

interests of the child as quickly as possible. All admission authorities **must** give highest priority in their oversubscription criteria to these children as required by Part 3 of the Admission Arrangements Regulations. The practical effect of this is that in a school's published admission arrangements the first and highest oversubscription criterion **must** be in respect of these children. Admission authorities **must not** include statements in their published admission arrangements that imply they have discretion over the admission of children in care or attach any conditions to the admission of such children.

Children in Care – faith schools

Paragraph 2.10 The admission authorities for faith schools may give first priority to all children in care, whether of the faith or not, but as a minimum they **must** give first priority to children in care of their faith above other children of their faith. Where they give any element of priority to children not of their faith, they **must** give priority in their oversubscription criteria to children in care not of their faith above other children not of their faith. More detailed guidelines for faith schools are provided at paragraphs 2.46 to 2.58, and on children in care in Chapter 3.

Local authority power to direct admission of Children in Care

Paragraph 3.35 Local authorities may direct other admission authorities for any maintained school to admit a child in their care to the school best suited to his or her needs¹[1]. Such action **must** be taken in the best interests of the child. Before giving a direction the local authority **must** consult the admission authority for the school they propose to specify in the direction. The admission authority then has seven days to inform the local authority if it is willing to admit the child without being directed to do so.

Paragraph 3.36 If, following the consultation, the local authority decides to issue the direction it **must** first inform the admission authority, the governing body (if the governing body is not the admission authority), the head teacher and, if the school is in another local authority area, the maintaining local authority. If the admission authority (or the governing body if it is not the admission authority and only in relation to a child in care who has previously been excluded from at least two schools) considers that admission of the child would seriously prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources, the admission authority has seven days in which to refer the case to the Schools Adjudicator. The Adjudicator may either uphold the direction, or, if the local authority that looks after the child agrees, determine that another maintained school in England **must** admit the child. The Adjudicator's decision is binding. The Adjudicator may not direct an alternative school to admit a child when the child has already been excluded from that school or when admission would seriously prejudice the provision of efficient education or efficient use of resources.

Paragraph 3.37 Where a local authority considers that a particular Academy will best meet the needs of the child, they can ask them to admit that child even when the Academy is full. A consensus will be reached locally in the large majority of cases, but if the Academy disagrees with the local authority's reasoning and refuses to admit the

child, the case can be referred to the Secretary of State. In such cases, the Secretary of State may direct an Academy to admit a child in care, and can seek advice from the Adjudicator in reaching his decision²[2]. In providing such advice, the Schools Adjudicator will consider the case in the same way as for maintained schools.

Taking all this into consideration we still get schools academies trying to refuse or slow down the admission process. With respect to academies the only avenue open is to appeal to the Secretary of State (See below)

Admission arrangements for Academies

Paragraph 1.15 Admission arrangements for Academies are approved by the Secretary of State as part of an Academy's funding agreement, which require compliance with admissions legislation and relevant Codes. An Academy is required to consult in the same way as other admission authorities do. Apart from increasing its admission number with local agreement following consultation, an Academy cannot alter its admission arrangements without the approval of the Secretary of State. Any objections to an Academy's admission arrangements will be considered by the Secretary of State.

10. Independent Reviewing Officers should consider challenging their counterparts in placing authorities regarding the appropriateness of placing looked after children in Kent.

Paul Brightwell to action

A decision has been made that all direct correspondence with other local authorities regarding the placing of children in Kent will be made through the Corporate Director Families and Social Care, rather than through the IRO service or VSK.

11. Identify other local authorities who have similar problems regarding looked after children being placed within their boundary and working with them to find a solution.

Cabinet Member to action although problems more acute in Kent than anywhere else

Work is underway through contacts with both Association of Director's of Children's Services and the South East Lead Members on this.

12. Write to London Boroughs to encourage them to work with each other to use vacant places in their boroughs to place looked after children.

Cabinet Member to action

Work is underway through contacts with both Association of Director's of Children's Services and the South East Lead Members on this.

13. Write to the Children's Minister, Tim Loughton to encourage him to enforce local authorities who place children more than 20 miles from their home (the 20mile limit) – include statistics separating the number of asylum seeking children in Kent and the number of looked after children placed by other local authorities in Kent.

Letter already written and reply received Note: The letter to and response from Tim Loughton MP is available from the Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on request.

Paul Brightwell to send over the statistics required which have been compiled by the Management Information Unit

[A spreadsheet outlining current numbers of looked after children placed in Kent by other local authorities/London Boroughs, for the months between December 2010 to December 2011\(district and county totals\) is presented at Appendix 1.](#)

14. Provide Members with details of the successor bodies to the Kent Improvement Board and Children's Services Improvement Panel to ensure Members continue to be part of the chain receiving information.

At the present time both the Board and the Panel will continue to exist until Kent's Children's Social Services receives an adequate judgement from Ofsted. However the CM would like to provide an assurance that the successor body or bodies will ensure that Members remain at the helm in driving through improvement and scrutiny of Children's Social Services through access to reliable and high quality performance management data.

Date of Officer Response: 20 March 2012

Cabinet Member's Response:

I thought it was a very constructive meeting and reflective of a sea change in Member involvement and engagement in Children's Social Services over the past year. I hope my comments as per the above are helpful and I will ensure the information requested is shortly distributed to Committee Members.

Date of Response: 18 December 2011

**Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 - 2015
(23 January 2012)**

Cabinet portfolio: Mr J Simmonds

Synopsis: The report presented the Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 - 2015

Reason for call-in: Members wished to examine the Draft Budget 2012/2013 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012 - 2015

Recommendations and responses:

- 15. Thank Mr King, Mr Simmonds, Miss Carey, Mr Wood, Mr Shipton and Mr Abbott for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.**
- 16. Ask that the Director of School Resources provide a breakdown of the financial effects on the Council of the transferral of schools to academy status, when it has been completed.**
- 17. Ask that the Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement provide a briefing note on how un-ring-fenced grants, such as the Early Intervention Grant, were now being administered within the authority, and how this related to the additional monies being made available for Youth Services commissioning.**
- 18. Ask that the Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement provide full details of the financial reserves held by the County Council.**

Cabinet Member's Response:

The information requested in recommendations 3 and 4 has been provided and circulated to Members of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee. A breakdown of the financial effects on the Council of the transferral of schools to academy status will be made available in March.

Date of Response:

17 February 2012

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

INFORMAL MEMBER GROUP ON BUDGETARY ISSUES

NOTES of a meeting of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held in Room 1.47 - Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 18 January 2012.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr G Cowan, Mr R J Lees and Mr R F Manning

ALSO PRESENT: Ms S J Carey and Mr J D Simmonds

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mr D Shipton (Acting Head of Financial Strategy), Mrs C Head (Chief Accountant) and Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**64. Notes of Previous Meeting on 4 January 2012 (attached for approval)**
(Item 1)

- (1) In response to a query about the calculation and recovery arrangements for the Academies Funding Transfer Mr Shipton offered to circulate KCC's response to the Government's consultation.
- (2) In relation to the KCC's future strategy to compensate for the loss of council tax freeze grant Mr Wood explained that the MTP showed a budget gap of £36million. Options would be set out to bridge this gap by making additional savings and/or increasing the council tax.

RESOLVED: that the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on Wednesday 4 January 2011 be approved as a correct record.

65. Revenue & Capital Budgets Monitoring Exception Report (Cabinet report attached)
(Item 2)

- (1) There had been an increase in the underspend on the Adult Social Care and Public Health portfolio.
- (2) Within the Environment, Highways and Waste portfolio the main areas of underspend had been the Concessionary Fares and the Freedom Pass. Members queried the effect of the mild winter and what would happen to any further underspend within the portfolio. Mr Wood explained that a decision would be made by Cabinet in June regarding any underspend.
- (3) In relation to the ownership of KCC's highways vehicles it was understood that these were owned or leased by Enterprise, this would be clarified with John Burr and reported back to members of the Budget IMG.

- (4) There continued to be pressure within the Specialist Children's Services portfolio, there were concerns over the cost of Asylum and discussions were continuing with the UK Border Agency about the removal of All Rights Exhausted clients and the legal duty to support such young people.
- (5) There was a street light replacement programme underway, and street lighting was the subject of a previous report to E, H & W POSC on 22 November 2011.
- (6) There was an underspend in Road Safety as a result of higher numbers of participants in speed awareness courses leading to additional income. Mrs Dean queried the additional income and whether this was solely from the courses, a response would be circulated to members of the Budget IMG after the meeting.
- (7) Mr Wood undertook to obtain further information on the issues delaying the plans for the Tunbridge Wells Library.

RESOLVED: that subject to the above information being provided, Members note the Revenue and Capital Budgets Monitoring Exception Report.

66. Medium Term Plan 2012 - 15 (incorporating the Budget and Council Tax setting for 2012/13) Update

(Item 3)

This report was not available in time for the meeting of the Budget IMG

67. Treasury Management Strategy

(Item 4)

- (1) Mr Simmonds introduced the Council's Treasury Strategy which was due to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 25 January 2012.

RESOLVED: that Members note the Treasury Strategy report.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**INFORMAL MEMBER GROUP ON BUDGETARY ISSUES**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held in the on Wednesday, 14 March 2012.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman) and Mr G Cowan

ALSO PRESENT: Ms S J Carey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee) and Mr A Webb (Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**68. Notes of Previous Meeting on 18 January 2012 (attached for approval)**
(Item 1)

RESOLVED: that the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on Wednesday 18 January 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

69. Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring 2011-12 (Cabinet report attached)
(Item 2)

(1) There had been a significant increase to revenue underspend since the 25 January Cabinet report, this was mainly due to:

- o the reporting of the roll forward of £4m Big Society Fund monies
- o the £3.2m Social Care Reform Grant contingency which was not required to fund prevention initiatives, due to these being funded by Health
- o £1.3m underspend in Adult Social Care due to falling demand
- o Schools agreeing to pay their share of the Carbon Reduction Commitment Levy (£1.1m)

(2) Demand in Specialist Children's Services continued to increase. There had also been a meeting with the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) regarding All Rights Exhausted individuals, including the subject of Human Rights Assessments. Discussions between legal teams were ongoing.

(3) In response to a query about the £200k planned underspend in the ELS portfolio on Building Maintenance, Mr Wood undertook to speak to Bruce MacQuarrie for more details.

(4) Regarding the returns from the disposal of property as a result of the move to Gateways, Mr Wood undertook to provide this information.

(5) In response to a query about staff vacancy savings in Childrens Centres, Mr Wood explained that not as many staff were required as set out in the Government's

'gold plated' standard for staffing the centres. Similarly, the savings from management actions around non-essential expenditure were due to very generous funding when the centres were set up, and they were possible without impact on the service

RESOLVED: that, subject to the above information being provided, Members note the Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring 2011-12 Cabinet Report.

70. Council Tax Benefit 2013/14

(Item 3)

(1) A 10% reduction in Council Tax Benefit was required by Government, and the responsibility for making the saving had been passed to Local Government.

(2) Since KCC received 80% of Council Tax, it had more to lose than other recipients, and could not absorb the 10% reduction. It would therefore be necessary to work closely with Districts, who would be formulating proposals for consultation.

(3) There was a risk that, if schemes differed greatly between Districts, it would create 'boundary hoppers' who might move to take advantage of more generous benefits/discounts.

(4) The legislation required Councils to protect people of pensionable age from any changes, and this group comprised around 40% of KCC's demography. This meant that the 10% reduction would have to be achieved from the remaining 60% of recipients. Mr Wood would circulate a breakdown of people of pensionable age by district.

RESOLVED: that Members note the information provided in respect of Council Tax Benefit 2013/14.