

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 28 February 2024.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr D L Brazier, Mrs L Game, Mr A J Hook, Dr L Sullivan and Mr S Webb

IN VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Prendergast.

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs P T Cole, Mr D Murphy, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE and Mr D Watkins

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms S Hill (Interim Director Adult Social Care), Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Mr S Samson (Interim Head of Economy), Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development), Mr R Smith (Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health) and Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

45. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2024 *(Item A4)*

In response to a query it was confirmed that the answer to the questions raised at the meeting and highlighted within the minutes were circulated to Committee Members on 6 February and were also available on the Scrutiny Teams Channel.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held 24 January 2024 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

46. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 - to follow *(Item A5)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 were an accurate record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

47. 23/00121 - Kent and Medway Economic Framework *(Item C1)*

1. Mr Murphy gave an introduction to the Kent and Medway Economic Framework which was finalised in January following consultation with local stakeholders including all local District and Borough Councils. The Framework set out high level priorities but was not a funded strategy. The Framework would be overseen by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and KCC was now working with partners and stakeholders to develop an implementation plan to take forward key action areas set out within the Framework.

2. Groups linked to the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) would take forward the implementation of the Framework with regular progress reviews being considered by KMEP.
3. Members asked questions in relation to the Kent and Medway Economic Framework, key issues raised by the Committee and responded to by the Cabinet Member and Officers included the following:
 - a. In response to a question about the implementation plan, Mrs Holt-Castle explained that the Framework was a partnership strategy, and KMEP and its new subgroups would have a significant role in overseeing delivery of the Framework and the implementation plan.
 - b. It was noted that there was no financial envelope for the Framework, Mrs Holt-Castle confirmed that the KCC Economy Budget would support elements of the Framework, there was no new funding accompanying the Framework. The Framework would support the KMEP to draw down funding from Government. Following comments, it was confirmed that the Framework created no additional financial pressure on KCC, there was no additional funding nor any funding commitment.
 - c. A Member queried measurable targets within the Framework and Mr Samson confirmed that KMEP would be tasked with this, the Framework was high level and the action plans phase would include targets and measurable outcomes.
 - d. Members considered it vital to prioritise the development of apprenticeships and the Member asked for reassurance that links existed with the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Directorate in relation to this. Mr Smith explained that the development of apprenticeships fell under the action areas identified by the Framework. The local skills improvement plan, led by the Chamber of Commerce had started work on a plan to reform the current apprenticeship programme. Both the CYPE and Growth, Economic Development and Communities (GEDC) Cabinet Committee would receive reports on this issue in the coming months. KCC ran a successful apprenticeship programme. It was very important that both directorates worked together to enhance the apprenticeship opportunities for young people across Kent and Medway.
 - e. A Member commented on the recommendation to the Cabinet Member to delegate to the Director Growth and Communities to take any necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision Mrs Holt-Castle confirmed that all decision making would be made in accordance with the governance arrangements of the council as set out in the constitution.
 - f. In relation to risk and the consequences of partner authorities not being able to contribute resources as planned Mrs Holt-Castle confirmed that to date KMEP had been fully facilitated by KCC so if a partner organisation was unable to contribute the position would be the same as today. A report would be submitted to the GEDC Cabinet Committee updating Members on the transfer of relevant responsibilities from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to KCC.
 - g. In response to a comment about Kent being geographically different in economic terms to the home counties, and whether any agency measured quality of life? Mr Samson explained that work was underway in relation to connectivity and services in Kent and Medway through Ebbsfleet and

Ashford. In relation to the measurement of quality of life; Mr Smith confirmed that Kent Analytics Team had been commissioned to assist with replacing the current dashboard of measurements of economic and social indicators to include the wider issues of quality of life.

- h. Work was underway with colleagues in CYPE to identify why young people in Kent schools were coming out of school with lower qualifications than those in schools in neighbouring counties, the results of this work would be included in the paper to the two Cabinet Committees.
- i. Referring to the EqIA and in light of potential changes within District and Borough Councils, a Member asked whether there were contingency plans in the event that political views changed. Mrs Holt-Castle explained that it was a high-level strategy and had been designed with the next 5 years in mind.
- j. In response to a question about how the Framework was targeted at deprived communities, Mrs Holt-Castle explained that the WorkWell bid would focus on this, the Employment Task Force had been working with partners to determine how young people in deprived communities were supported to access work.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee discussed and endorsed the Kent and Medway Economic Framework.

48. Making a Difference Every Day, KCC's Strategy for Adult Social Care 2022 to 2027 - update
(Item C2)

1. Mrs Cole, Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) introduced this item. The three main areas raised through the consultation on the Making a Difference Every Day Strategy were:
 - a. Support to remain independent.
 - b. Spend money and funding appropriately.
 - c. One consistent contact.
2. Ms Sydney Hill gave a presentation to Members of the Committee which is available here: [Agenda for Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 28th February, 2024, 10.00 am \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
3. In response to a question about engaging with communities which did not have full access to digital communication Mr Smith explained that the digital offer would never replace the need for face-to-face contact and access to telephone contact, it was vitally important to get the basics right.
4. In relation to a question about the growing number of people being referred with mental health issues Ms Hill explained there had been a significant impact, both post covid and secondary impacts on people's mental health, it was one of the areas of continued growth in support services.
5. Mr Smith commented that the report back to Scrutiny was timely, the creation of community teams was a recognition of the feedback received, putting social workers back into the communities. The next phase was to build on these teams.

6. KCC was working with NHS partners to ensure a better experience for individuals and investing in the enablement offer to ensure, where possible, people could return home. In response to a comment about difficulties in contacting Adult Social Care by telephone Mr Smith recognised that response times were not where they wanted to be. There was a national workforce problem which was reflected in Kent, however he recognised the commitment and time invested by the current staff in Adult Social Care. Mr Watkins commented that he would review KCC's website to ensure communication options for contacting ASCH were more prominent.
7. In response to a comment about how the Strategy was radical Mrs Cole explained that the Strategy supported people to connect to their communities and ensured the KCC was aware of the best and most appropriate support for people to enable them to remain living at home. Mr Smith highlighted the legal aspects of ASCH and the responsibilities of the service which went alongside the person-centred care which had never truly been delivered and this Strategy involved people in decision making and had been co-designed and co-produced by those people who drew on the support of ASCH.
8. In relation to ASCH workforce Ms Hill explained that this was broad and included a range of staff, there was plans to address workforce gaps in the short, medium and long term whilst bearing in mind the aging workforce. Recruitment campaigns aimed to attract people into Kent, this included a market premium for North Kent where there was competition from London. There was an annual apprenticeship programme and ASCH was working closely with CYPE colleagues around recruitment campaigns for newly qualified social workers and with universities in relation to student placements.
9. Plans were in place for a mid-point review of the Strategy and the approach for co-production would form part of the discussions around this review.
10. Ms Hill explained that there were clear interventions which required a qualified social worker or physiotherapist practitioner to attend to, there were also a range of activities which did not need a qualified practitioner, so it was important to ensure interventions were evaluated to determine where a qualified practitioner was required and where supervision was required.
11. A Member commented that the Strategy was transformational, the cost of ASCH was an existential threat to the financial stability of the council and the Strategy was as much necessity as what KCC would like to be doing. The Strategy was saving money as well as providing better care to those being looked after with increasingly complex needs in an extremely difficult market. Mr Watkins agreed that this was the key Strategy in the Council's most challenged directorate, quantitative evidence and data was important and this would be looked at as part of the mid-point review. Mrs Cole commented that the Key Performance Indicators were also useful and these would continue to be closely monitored.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee note the Making a Different Every Day Strategy.

49. Adult Social Care Contract Extensions (Item C3)

1. Mr Streatfeild introduced this item as he had requested it be placed on the Scrutiny Committee agenda. Five contract extensions had been discussed recently at the Adult Social Care Committee, with extensions ranging from 1-3 years and a total value of £1.5billion. The decisions came to Cabinet Committee only three months before they were required to be extended. During the process Cabinet Committee Members noted that they would have liked to have had sight of the extensions and options available before the deadline for the Cabinet Member to make the decision. Mr Watkins empathised with the frustrations of Members over the timings of these decisions but confirmed that this did not affect the ability to make proposed savings.
2. Mr Ellis endorsed the previous comments that this was not a position the Council wanted to be in, additional controls had been put in place to ensure this did not happen again. Progress had been made in making the best use of the contracts in place, maximising the use of the framework providers and negotiating fees for non-framework providers.
3. A Member asked whether the cost of care review had been completed and how long it was expected that consultants would remain in this role? Mr Watkins confirmed that the initial findings had been released and this information could be made available. The consultants were from 31ten Consulting, and the costs would be confirmed outside of the meeting.
4. In relation to the savings targets and whether they had been factored into these extensions Mr Watkins explained that £13million of savings were required per year, these 5 contracts did not disadvantage KCC in making these savings, the additional transformation savings in ASCH related to the MADE Strategy.
5. Members emphasised the importance of the timing issues around these contract extensions and that being left with short notice must not be repeated. Mr Ellis confirmed that work was starting on future contract renewals with the initial stage being engaging with the people relying on the services, stakeholders, then detailed design work and commissioning and procurement being the final stage, a more detailed timetable would be made available. Mr Watkins confirmed that a new team had been established within ASCH to undertake strategic commissioning on a partnership-based procurement model. This had resulted in changes to the way services were commissioned, in addition a contract database provided transparency and the ability to view all contracts.
6. There had been overspending within the contracts and there was concern that the savings targets would not be met. Mr Watkins and Mr Ellis explained that savings would be made by moving services onto framework rates and having discussions with non-framework providers around what is required to gain contracts with KCC and that is: quality and cost. Mr Smith commented that the frameworks were demand driven and it was essential that commissioning and operational colleagues worked closely together in conjunction with NHS colleagues to reduce demand for contracts.
7. The Chairman confirmed that he would discuss with the Opposition Group Spokespeople about further scrutiny of ASCH contracts. This also linked with the important role the Scrutiny Committee had in monitoring the achievement of key

savings and transformation over the coming financial year. It was considered that 6 months would be a reasonable timescale for return to the Committee to review the relevant commissioning data and the impact on the budgets and care provided – this would be discussed with the Chair of the ASCH Cabinet Committee to ensure reporting was not duplicated.

8. The Chairman and Opposition Group Leaders will discuss with the ASCH Cabinet Committee Chairman how to and when to undertake further reporting on commissioning data, the impact on budgets and care provided.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the information provided in relation to ASCH contract extensions.

50. Work Programme

(Item C4)

1. The Scrutiny Research Officer confirmed that discussions would be held with the Chairman, Opposition Group Spokespeople and Adults Cabinet Committee Chairman to determine the most appropriate place for monitoring, but this would also be picked up with the Scrutiny Committee's role in budget monitoring.
2. In response to a question from the Chairman around the one-year review of the SEND Sub-Committee the Scrutiny Research Officer confirmed that the Sub-Committee would review their Annual Report in March and this report would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in April.

RESOLVED to note the work programme.