

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 22 November 2023

PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mr T Bond, Mr N J D Chard, Ms M Dawkins, Mr A J Hook, Rich Lehmann, Mr J P McInroy, Mr H Rayner, Mr R J Thomas, Mr P Stepto and Dr L Sullivan

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P Oakford

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Ms J Hansen (Finance Business Partner (Strategic & Corporate Services), Mr D Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance), Ms L Gannon (Director of Technology), Miss K Reynolds (Democratic Services Officer), Ms R Anderson (Asset Utilisation Lead), Mr H D'Alton (Investment and Disposal Surveyor), Ms C Maynard (Head of Commissioning Portfolio - Outcome 2 and 3), Miss K Phillips (Strategic Business Adviser - GET), Mr J Sanderson (Head of Property Operations) and Mr B Sherreard (Programme Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

171. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Whiting and Mr Cannon. Mrs Prendergast was present as substitute for Mr Whiting.

172. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item 3)

Ms Dawkins declared an interest as the Director of a Community Interest Company (CIC).

173. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023

(Item 4)

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2023 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

174. Initial Draft Budget 2024-25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-27

(Item 5)

1. Mr Peter Oakford introduced the report which set out the background to the setting of the capital programme, revenue budget and medium-term financial plan (MTFP) for the forthcoming year. The report included fuller details of

funding, spending, savings, income and reserves estimates in the initial draft revenue budget together with analysis of risks. To avoid the risk of an unbalanced budget, it was said that spending controls had already been introduced and that all discretionary services were under review for 2024-25. It was highlighted that reserves could not be relied upon to balance the budget as this would negatively impact the financial sustainability of the Council.

2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) The Draft Budget 2024-25 for consideration at the January Committee meeting would be updated following the latest inflation forecasts. Mr Shipton highlighted that there would also be part-year increases.
 - b) The household waste recycling programme had been paused, however, the team were looking into an alternative proposal to deliver the savings in this area.
 - c) Commercial Services were being reviewed for the first time since these services had been set up. The dividends from these services were substantial and Mr Oakford assured Members that he did not have any concerns with this area of business.
 - d) Work was being undertaken with 9 districts that still had Council Tax discounts on empty properties. The districts were proposing to remove those discounts and KCC was incentivising this through funding the extra collection costs.
 - e) Regarding Appendix D, Members requested the addition of a column which indicates what the current value is, or percentage change, for ease of comparison.
3. RESOLVED to note the initial draft capital and revenue budgets including responses to consultation. There were no suggestions for changes to be made to the section of the budget related to the Cabinet Committee's portfolio area before the draft is considered by Cabinet on 25th January 2024 and presented to Full County Council on 19th February 2024.

175. Contract Management Review Group Update

(Item 6)

1. Ms Clare Maynard introduced the report which reflected on the work of the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG) since it was originally convened in September 2016. It also provided an update on amendments to the Terms of Reference (Annex A), including membership, of the CMRG and the approach to future meetings of the Group, following the Council's launch of a new Commercial and Procurement Division in September 2023.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) Members raised concerns regarding the composition of the CMRG and requested the membership of the group be increased to include more Members. Mr Peter Oakford confirmed that this was an intention of the Chair.
 - b) The work programme for the CMRG was being reviewed. There would be an opportunity for the CMRG Members to comment on the work

programme and ensure that this reflected the balance of risk and complexity of the contracts.

- c) Regarding the regular occurrence of contract extensions, Ms Maynard confirmed that there was a requirement to evidence that any contract extension was delivering best value.

3. RESOLVED to consider and note this report.

176. Annual Equality and Diversity Report

(Item 7)

1. Mr David Whittle introduced the report which set out progress against Kent County Council's six Equality Objectives, as set out within Framing Kent's Future; both the annual report and equality objectives forming part of KCC's statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. Mr Whittle thanked Laura McPherson who had led the delivery of the report. It was highlighted that the compilation of the Annual Equality & Diversity report had been underpinned by a more analytical and cross-council approach following the introduction of the new Equality Objectives for 2022-2026. It was said that the Corporate Equality Group would use evidence from the Annual Report to work with services and directorates to drive improvement in priority areas.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) The evidence in the report and the staff survey have been communicated to the Corporate Management Team, who engaged through management channels and staff groups to encourage the reporting of issues relating to equality and diversity.
 - b) It was highlighted that the duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 was to consider equalities, and thereby mitigate negative impacts where possible.
 - c) In relation to declaring disabilities, Mr Whittle agreed to explore potential opportunities with the Staff Communications team to provide staff with positive examples of disabled staff thriving and being supported in the council to encourage colleagues to self-declare their disabilities.
3. RESOLVED to approve the Annual Equality & Diversity Report for 2022-23, attached as Appendix A.

177. 23/00101 - Kent Communities Programme

(Item 8)

1. Mr Oakford introduced the draft report for discussion as to its further development before it was presented to the Cabinet for consideration ahead of the 30 November meeting. It was said that the Kent Communities programme aimed to rationalise KCC's physical estate and propose a greater mix of alternative methods of service delivery across the county in face of the Council's significant financial pressures.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
 - a) The cost of the consultation process was approximately £40,000. The headline cost of the Programme was included in the report and an updated

figure would be provided ahead of the decision being considered by Cabinet.

- b) Further information regarding the redevelopment of the Ray Allen South Ashford Centre would be provided to Members outside of the meeting.
 - c) It was said that youth would have better access to support services through the introduction of the Family Hubs than that offered by the current Youth Hub provision. The Family Hub Programme team would be able to provide further information regarding the cessation of the commissioned youth contracts and expected impact of this.
 - d) Service delivery could be undermined by the condition of the Council buildings should they not undergo the required maintenance. The Kent Communities Programme was intended to put the Council in a better position to address the maintenance issues with the current Council estate.
 - e) It was highlighted that the Kent Communities Programme sought to achieve savings for the Council while providing the right services, in the right way for Kent communities. While delivering savings was a key driver for the programme, the usage of the Council's buildings had been reviewed using the Needs Framework to understand both demand and need for services.
 - f) Regarding concerns raised in relation to the lack of sufficient information on the projected savings created by the Kent Communities Programme, Mr Oakford assured Members that Cabinet would be held accountable should the savings not be delivered. He confirmed that the capital receipts from the disposal of Council buildings would be reinvested into the maintenance of the remaining estate.
3. Following the debate, the Chairman put to the vote the recommendations set out in the report and the voting was as follows:

For (7)

Mr Dendor, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mr Chard, Mr McInroy, Mr Rayner, Mr Thomas

Against (5)

Ms Dawkins, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Stepto, Dr Sullivan

Abstain (2)

Mr Bond, Mrs Prendergast

4. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to:
- a) Consider and note the feedback from the Kent Communities Consultation on the proposals, as well as responses to the Family Hub Consultation, insofar as they are relevant to the Kent Communities proposals, alongside the amended policy and financial position set out in the report 'Securing Kent's Future;'
 - b) Consider the options as set out in the decision report and confirm an option to be implemented including agreement of:
 - i. The network of buildings to be utilised to support the delivery of following services:
 - Open access youth and children services – including Public Health
 - Adults with Learning Disabilities

- CLS – Adult Education
 - Gateways
- ii. The decommissioning of services at those buildings which are no longer to be utilised to support the delivery of the services outlined above.
 - iii. The co-design of outreach services with partners.
- c) Approve expenditure from capital budget to enable adaptations to the agreed network of buildings in order to facilitate the co-location of multiple services;
 - d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Directors of Children Young People & Education (CYPE), Growth Environment & Transport (GET), Deputy Chief Executives Department (DCED) and Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH) to design the staffing model to support the changes as agreed in part b of the decision above, undertake the necessary staff consultation and implement any changes as a result; and
 - e) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to enter into the necessary contracts and legal agreements to facilitate the implementation of the decisions.

178. 23/00108 - Disposal of former Halfway Houses Primary School, Southdown Road, Halfway, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 3BE
(Item 9)

1. Mr Oakford and Mr Hugh D'Alton introduced the report which set out the proposed disposal of the Property, the Former Halfway Houses Primary School, Southdown Road, Halfway, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 3BE. It was confirmed that the site had been declared surplus and that the Council had gained consent of the Secretary of State for Education to dispose of the school site and the playing field. It was emphasised that this would be a substantial capital receipt that would be re-invested in the Council's capital programme.
2. In response to questions and comments it was said that the intention was to openly market the site in quarter one (Q1) of 2024 on an "all enquiries" basis to allow any interested parties to submit a bid for the site. This included the opportunity for a joint venture where this could be shown to demonstrate best value for KCC in the disposal. However, it was said that the property was not of a scale that would usually warrant offers for a joint venture.
3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to agree to the disposal of the Property, the former Halfway Houses Primary School, Southdown Road, Halfway, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 3BE and Delegate Authority to:
 - a) The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to finalise the terms of the disposal; and
 - b) The Director of Infrastructure to authorise the execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

179. 23/00106 - Oracle Enterprise Business Capabilities System – Hosting and Support
(Item 10)

1. Mr Oakford and Ms Gannon introduced the report which set out the proposed decision to award a contract and the permitted contract term extensions to Rimini Street for the support of the Council's Oracle E-Business Suite. It was said that this was a short-term extension to ensure business continuity during the implementation of the Council's Oracle E-Business Suite.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to:
 - a) award a contract and the permitted contract term extensions to Rimini Street for the support of the Council's Oracle E-Business Suite (April 2024 to April 2026 with the potential for extensions to 2027);
 - b) delegate authority to the Director of Technology in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to activate the permitted contract term extensions; and
 - c) delegate authority to the Director of Technology to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to entering in contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

180. Work Programme
(Item 11)

RESOLVED to consider and note the planned work programme for 2023.