

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 22 January 2014.

PRESENT: Mr P B Carter, CBE (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier, Mr G Cooke, Mr M C Dance, Mr G K Gibbens, Mr R W Gough, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr J D Simmonds, MBE, Mr B J Sweetland and Mrs J Whittle

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

38. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 December 2013

(Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

39. Other items which the Chairman decides are relevant or urgent

(Item 4)

None.

40. Christmas / New Year Storms & Floods - Update Report

(Item 5 – Report of Mr Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Corporate Director Customer and Communities)

Cabinet received a report providing an update on the response by KCC and partners to the storms and flooding experienced over the Christmas and New Year period.

The Cabinet Member, Mr Hill introduced the report and in particular referred to the following:

- i. that although the political and media interest had focused on particular areas of the county, many areas had been flooded. 28,500 properties had been without power and 19,000 calls had been received by the KCC contact centre and 1500 to KCC Highways department regarding fallen trees, in addition 134 rescues had been performed by the Kent Fire and Rescue Authority.
- ii. That the circumstances had been exceptional and challenging combining not only rain and floods but high winds. In addition the emergency was prolonged and fell over the Christmas period.
- iii. Some issues had already emerged and would be considered further for the future:
 - a. Communications between individuals and agencies had been difficult. Therefore staff had been needed 'on the ground' to communicate safety messages

- b. Additional staff had been needed, particularly in the contact centre, however some staff had been working very long hours that would not have been sustainable for any longer a period of time
 - c. The handover between the emergency and recovery stages was difficult to co-ordinate given the ongoing bad weather and needed to be tightly managed to be effective
 - d. Community wardens and other staff working out in affected communities had been invaluable in communicating messages and supporting the county's vulnerable residents.
 - e. That the newly conceived Kent Support and Assistance Service provided food, clothing and some furniture to people in considerable distress and had been well received
- iv That a police chaired meeting of the Kent Resilience Forum would be held as part of the debriefing process and further report to cabinet in the spring,
- iv. He concluded by expressing his pride in the work of KC officers and partners in managing what had been a difficult and drawn out emergency

Stuart Beaumont, Head of Community Safety and Emergency Planning, supported Mr Hill's comments and assured Cabinet that the debriefings would be thorough and would focus on the issues raised by residents, partners and officers and would report back to Cabinet in the future.

Steve Terry, Emergency Planning Manager, reminded Cabinet that KCC had played a significant role in saving and protecting lives, including during rescue operations which had been co-ordinated by various partners (including volunteers) and that the joint nature of the work had been crucial to its success. He also reminded members that although the risk to life had reduced the emergency was not yet over.

The Leader endorsed the comments received and confirmed that further work would be carried out to assess the actions taken by all parties during the emergency, in particular, he hoped that Environment Agency would consider the timeliness of warnings for residents, and to that end requested that they be invited as a guest of the Flood Risk Management Committee to discuss such issues. He also requested that a further issue be discussed by the Committee; flood defences and the possibility, with help from central government, of longer term pre-emptive measures being taken to avert floods.

Finally, he addressed the issue of the Bellwin Scheme to which local authorities could apply for compensation from central government where spending on emergencies exceeded 3.3 million. He assured cabinet that the government was supportive of efforts to make good damage from the storms and to that end the Council had already put a further 2.5 million in to pothole repair across the County, but it was not expected that this would be the total of costs incurred.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Public Health, Mr Gibbens, concurred with praise already received for voluntary sector support during the emergency and further praised the staff within his own directorate for the work they had done to protect Kent's most vulnerable residents during the emergency. He urged the Corporate Director for Families and Social Care to write to those voluntary organisations to thank them for the help received by KCC.

Responding to a question from the Leader, Mr Beaumont reported that Parish Council's would be consulted as part of the multi-agency debrief, as would the Environment Agency.

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment, Mr Brazier spoke to the item; he reported the contribution of the Highways team as follows:

- A red alert had been put in place on the 22nd December and remained over Christmas and many additional staff had been brought in.
- Over 2000 trees had been cleared in the space of 2 days and main roads cleared relatively quickly. However country roads were more difficult to clear, some taking up to week, owing to the lack of drainage options for the water.
- The ban on vans to household waste disposal units had been temporarily lifted and this had successfully helped residents who had been flooded to clear damaged property quickly and easily.
- Repair to potholes was ongoing but the cost could not yet be estimated.

Mr Bird, local member for Maidstone Central, had requested and been granted permission to speak at the meeting by the Chairman. Mr Bird made the following points as a resident affected by the flood:

- That the majority of residents of Yalding were grateful for the support that they had received from the various agencies involved.
- That the flood in 2000 had been relatively well managed, but on this occasion that had not been the case. No severe flood warning was issued to residents of Yalding and this led to difficulties in convincing some residents to evacuate.
- That in the future systems of communication should be improved, including systems that do not rely on telephone or electronic communication.
- Finally he suggested that pre-emptive measures be taken to avert flooding and argued that flood prevention was less costly than flooding damage, loss and inability of residents to get to work.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services, Mr Gary Cooke, extended sympathy to all of those affected. He reported that KCC premises had also been flooded including record storage areas. He thanked a number of staff who had worked on Boxing Day in order to raise boxes of valuable personal data above the flood line.

Director of Public Health, Mrs Peachey reported that Community Resilience during the flood had been particularly strong and work would be done to capture the best elements of the work between the emergency planning team and the local communities in order to build on it for the future.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services, Mr Bryan Sweetland urged officers and Members to ensure that resident input was sought during any debrief period. He commended the KCC Highways department and the Community Wardens for their work with residents.

The Leader thanked those officers and volunteers who had worked through Christmas to aid during the flood and asked that a full report be considered by

Cabinet in the future when debrief work was complete and conclusions and recommendations for the future could be made.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted and that a full report be brought and considered in the spring.

41. Budget 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2014 - 17

(Item 6 – Report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Mr John Simmonds and Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement, Andy Wood)

Cabinet received a report setting out the proposed final draft budget for 2014/15 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2014/17 to be presented to County Council for agreement on 13th February 2014.

The Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement, Mr Simmonds, introduced the report for Cabinet. In particular he referred to the following:

- That the Council had taken £250 million from the budget in the last three years as a result of pressures and funding reductions and that the trend was set to continue.
- That in light of these difficult economic pressures the news that the government had reconsidered the cessation of the New Homes Bonus was welcomed.
- That the proposed budget represented the core objectives that continued to be pursued by Kent County Council, Growth without Gridlock, Bold Steps for Kent and protecting the vulnerable.
- That the transformation agenda would be crucial to maintaining services in the future.
- That it was crucial that the council was aware of the priorities of residents of Kent while spending an ever reduced budget which made difficult choices more and more likely.
- That the floods had served as a reminder to members of the importance of being financially prepared for the unexpected.
- The consultation had been well run and successful and it was largely as a result of this that it was agreed that council tax should be raised by 1.99% as respondents suggested that they would endorse such a rise to protect services for the vulnerable.

The Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement, Andy Wood, spoke to the item, he particularly highlighted the following, while referring to slides [appendix 1]:

- That the Local Government Settlement announced on the 18th December was largely in line with the predictions made by officers at Kent.
- That the council tax base was higher than had been expected and further news had been received from central government who had agreed to continue the New Homes Bonus and the Council Tax Freeze Grant, both of which had been at risk.

In relation to the proposed Capital budget he reported that:

- The Capital budget for the next three years continued to sit above £600 million
- A continued limit of 15% on borrowing costs had been included in the budget.

- A large proportion of the budget would be spent on schools and roads but a proportion continued to be spent on regeneration projects such as Broadband roll out and Live Margate

In relation to the proposed Revenue budget Mr Wood reported:

- The inclusion of a proposed increase in council tax of 1.99% just under the referendum threshold currently set by the Government. Parliament was due to consider the threshold further before the 12th February and therefore, should it alter, last minute amendments to the budget would be needed at the Council meeting of the 13th February.
- That the council tax increase and the tax base increase reported earlier combined to create an additional 19m set against 35m reduction in Grant funding. With other factors included the council had a total reduction of 18m in the overall budget.
- Pressures continued to build in some service delivery areas and costs continued to rise. These pressures, although sometimes offset by transferred monies, would continue to increase the spend required by KCC, by approximately 73m.
- Considering increases and reductions, pressures and transferred monies, the overall saving required would be 80m. The proposed budget achieved these savings.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Mr Mark Dance, spoke to the item. He talked about the statutory / non-statutory divide and hoped that the council would continue to bid for funds to deliver non-statutory services that in turn would ease pressure on statutory functions.

The Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services, Mrs Jenny Whittle flagged up an emerging pressure within specialist children's services. The 'Staying put' policy, whereby local authorities would be required to provide for looked after children to stay with foster parents until the age of 21. Although Kent County Council already offered young people that option this policy was likely to increase demand. In contrast, Mrs Whittle also reported a potential saving relating to a proposed reduction in court fees that if introduced would save between £400,000 and £1m.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services, Mr Bryan Sweetland joined the discussion to add that a review of traded companies had been conducted and rationalisation of the structure had taken place. As a result, the current contribution of £5m was predicted to grow to £10m after two financial years. In addition the businesses employed a significant number of people and continued to provide services nationwide.

The Leader welcomed the news from the traded services portfolio, something which the transformation would encourage in the future.

The Deputy Leader concluded the discussion by thanking officers within the Finance department for their continued hard work and professionalism in delivering a timely budget against ever tighter deadlines.

It was RESOLVED that the final draft budget and the Council Tax precept taking into account proposed amendments from Cabinet Committees and any necessary changes arising out of the provisional Local Government Settlement and Council

Tax/Business Rate tax base notification from district councils be endorsed to County Council on the 13th February for agreement.

42. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 2013 / 14 - October

(Item 7 – (Report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement Mr John Simmonds and Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement, Andy Wood)

Cabinet received a report providing the budget monitoring position for October 2013-14 for both revenue and capital budgets. Due to revenue finance resources being focused predominately on preparing the 2014-15 budget, no activity data was supplied.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement introduced the report for Cabinet. He made the following comments:

- That the predicted underspend had been reduced to £1m from £4m owing to certain commitments and unexpected increases to costs, such as SEN Transport, which would rise to £2.4m following management action. However he remained confident that the targeted £4m underspend would be achieved.

In relation to the Capital budget

- That the budget was set at £316m but the forecast outturn was currently £273m owing largely to the rescheduling of projects
- That £3m had been made available from the reserves for severe weather action relating to road maintenance repairs required after the flooding.

In response to the a question from the Leader the Corporate Director for Finance and Procurement detailed work that would be undertaken to ensure that the targeted underspend of £4m would be achieved by the end of the financial year. He reported that a moratorium would be put in place in order that departments were careful with discretionary spending and this was expected to save £1.5m to £2m.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health reform spoke to the item in order to address the overspend in SEN transport. He reported that work between the Education and Transport Integration teams continued to attempt to identify reasons for and solutions to the underspend. The SEND Strategy due for release the following week would help to address issues of transport by creating more places in local schools for children with special needs amongst other actions.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Public Health, Mr Gibbens, confirmed that the number of people with Learning Disabilities needing services and care from the local authority was increasing and that this would continue to create budget pressures for the Adult Social Care portfolio.

The Cabinet Member for Community Services, Mr Mike Hill welcomed the underspend within the communities directorate and thanked the Corporate Director for her continued work to deliver services under budget.

It was Resolved that:

1. That the latest monitoring position on both the revenue and capital budgets be noted
2. That the changes to the capital programme as detailed in the actions column in table 2 of the annex reports be agreed.
3. That the additional capital spending as a result of the introduction of an emergency highways repair programme, within the EH&W portfolio, following the recent flooding be noted

43. Unlocking the Potential, Growing for Growth: The Kent and Medway Growth Plan

(Item 8 – Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Mr Mark Dance and the Director of Economic and Spatial Development, Barbara Cooper)

Cabinet received a report introducing ‘Unlocking the Potential: Going for Growth’, the draft Kent and Medway Growth Plan and explaining how the document would link to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership’s Strategic Economic Plan and potential future Government and European funding.

The Leader spoke briefly of the projects at hand referring members to the significant funds available through the LEP and the importance of planning in advance for funding which might be allocated. In addition he spoke of the European funding available and urged innovative thinking and delivery to allow non-statutory functions in light of revenue budget cuts. Finally he reported the success of regeneration projects in Kent and his desire to see this kind of work continued through new funding streams.

The strong local government / business partnership in Kent, would he believed, be key to the success of those projects and schemes about which he had spoken.

Ross Gill, Economic Strategy and Policy Manager, spoke to the item. He reported that:

- ‘Unlocking the Potential’ would require two steps before 31st March 2014 when it would be submitted to Government. Firstly, a strategy for Kent and Medway that was consistent and agreeable to all parties must be agreed by all. Secondly, the high level allocations suggested for the use of local growth fund and European monies, in part allocated dependant on the origin of the money and partly on the aims and objectives for Kent.
- He was confident that KCC was on track in terms of timing and content at this stage and with the continued work of all parties would have a solid submission by March.
- A further commissioning plan would be produced containing further spending detail would then be produced before the funding became available in April 2015.

Paul Crick, Director of Planning and Environment, spoke to the item, he particularly made reference to the following points:

- That the original Growth without Gridlock document launched in December 2010 which put forward a bold plan for transport delivery of which much had been achieved would now be replaced by a new document allocating funding from the single local growth fund which had devolved to LEPs.

- That £2 billion over 6 years had been committed by government, the allocation to Kent was yet to be decided but it was likely to be largely appropriated to transport schemes.
- The LEP federated model meant that it was now appropriate to include Medway in any plans and the document produced would form the transport element of 'unlocking the potential'.
- The new Growth without Gridlock document also included new and important information from Government relating to the Lower Thames Crossing and to future plans for aviation and the impact of both for transport in Kent.
- The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership agreed the Growth without Gridlock refresh in January 2014 and it had been considered by the Environment Highways and Waste Cabinet Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development spoke to the item. In particular he made reference to the following:

- He commended the document as readable yet detailed and felt that it provided a solid base for the work of the council and partners in these important areas in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform entered the discussion, he reminded Cabinet of the Skills dimension of the Growth plan. He believed it would build on the work already ongoing in apprenticeships and employability for young people. A challenge existed to ensure maximum opportunities for those seeking employment and those seeking to employ and ensuring that the needs of both could be met.

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services, Mr Cooke, spoke of the Lorrywatch initiative which had been received with differing levels of enthusiasm by residents. He urged officers to build spare capacity in to any transport plans, in particular referring to the closure of the B2163 and the resulting traffic congestion that had been caused. He expressed disappointment that the new document no longer supported two previously included by-pass schemes.

The Leader responded to the comments of the Cabinet Member and reported that the Maidstone Local Transport Plan was still under discussion with the Borough Council and would be concluded when housing plans had been finalised.

The Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services, Mr Sweetland welcomed the projection of the ebbsfleet valley in 20 years time and was sure that if realised, it would greatly improve the local economy. In addition he referred to the introduction of free flow tolling cameras at the Dartford crossing and the delays to implementation that had occurred to date. He encouraged officers to seek to ensure that the Department for Transport fulfilled its most recent promise to implement them in October 2014.

The Leader concluded by commenting on the devolved nature of future funding and the need for Local Government to conceive and deliver successful projects or risk reduction in funding. He requested that an Executive summary be added to the document in order that the Government can see the freedoms and flexibilities that would further enhance the projects such as half price travel fares for young people and the thoughtful allocation of troubled families to appropriate areas of the council.

The Leader requested that further information be received for consideration by Cabinet in the future.

It was RESOLVED that the report be noted.

44. Adult Transformation Programme for Older People and Physical Disabilities Division, Families and Social Care - Update

(Item 9 – Report of the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Public Health, Mr Graham Gibbens and Corporate Director of Families and Social Care, Andrew Ireland)

Cabinet received a report providing an update on one aspect of the Transformation of Adult Social Care Programme, from the Older People and Physical Disability (OPPD) Division and outlining further planned changes for the Division.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Public Health introduced the report for Cabinet; he described the update which the report provided on the transformation programme and the work undertaken in partnership with Newton Europe. A key element of that work would be the further integration of health and social care and the significant impact of partnership work on the support provided for Older People in Kent. He summarised some of the changes that had taken place:

- Clinical Commissioning Group boundaries had been adopted by the Older People's team.
- Staff in hospitals now deliver services 7 days a week and in the future all offices would be working between 8am and 8pm
- That a 'model office' trial had been successfully introduced and would be rolled out to other teams around Kent

He noted some of the achievements of last year's 'Model Office' initiative in Dover:

- 40% reduction in the number of onward assessments
- 70% reduction in waiting time for service users
- 60% reduction of overdue reviews
- 20% reduction in the time that practitioners spent on paperwork

Mr Gibbens asserted that in addition to these benefits the new practices would strengthen safeguarding.

He reminded Members that the Health and Social Care Act had been a catalyst for the changes described and that the Care Bill currently progressing through parliament would introduce further integration and shared service delivery with the voluntary sector, requiring further changes to working practices and support older people needing care. In preparation for this time a conference would be held to liaise with the voluntary sector. A further report would be brought before Cabinet when the Care Bill became an Act.

Anne Tidmarsh, Director Older People's and Physical Disability, made a presentation to Cabinet regarding the evidence gathered after one year to support the success of the transformation and work with Newton Europe later joined by Mark Lobban, Director Strategic Commissioning. The presentation detailed the work undertaken and results achieved [attached as appendix 2]

Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director of Families and Social Care commented on the strong relationship between good practice and efficiency and therefore savings.

- i) That the progress to date in support of the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme be noted.
- ii) That the better service outcomes for the public as a result of implementing the Boundaries Realignment and Transformation Programme through implementation of the Model Office be noted.
- iii) That the financial savings from 2013 to 2015 as a result of changes to date and further proposed changes be noted.
- iv) That the intention through the Integration Pioneer Action Plan and Steering Group to accelerate health and social care closer working and integration be endorsed.
- v) That the plan to review and develop the OPPD workforce in line with roll-out of the Model Office and integration of social care and health services be endorsed
- vi) That a detailed Care Bill implementation plan is presented to Cabinet in due course, detailing how the key tasks of the plan will be aligned to the Care pathways, Optimisation or Commissioning work streams of the Transformation Programme be endorsed.