

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room - Sessions House on Friday, 18 January 2019

PRESENT: Mr B J Sweetland (Chairman), Mr R A Marsh (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr R H Bird, Mr T Bond, Mr D L Brazier (Substitute for Mr M D Payne), Mr N J D Chard, Mr G Cooke (Substitute for Mrs M E Crabtree), Mrs P T Cole, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mr P W A Lake, Mr D Murphy, Mr H Rayner and Mr I Thomas

ALSO PRESENT: Miss S J Carey, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr R L H Long, TD and Miss C Rankin

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director Engagement, Organisation Design & Development), Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director Strategic & Corporate Services), Ms Z Cooke (Corporate Director of Finance), Mr R Fitzgerald (Performance Manager), Ms J Hansen (Finance Business Partner (Strategic & Corporate Services), Ms K Ripley (Head of Property Strategy and Commissioning), Mr M Scrivener (Corporate Risk Manager), Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance (Policy, Planning and Strategy)), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr D Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance) and Miss E West (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

127. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs Crabtree, Mr Oakford and Mr Payne.

Mr Cooke attended as a substitute for Mrs Crabtree, and Mr Brazier attended as a substitute for Mr Payne.

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

(Item 3)

No declarations of interest were received.

129. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee meeting held on 20 November 2018

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held on 20 November 2018 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

130. Capital Programme 2019-22, Revenue Budget 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-22

(Item 5)

Mr Shipton (Head of Finance (Policy, Planning and Strategy)), Ms Hansen (Finance Business Partner (Strategic & Corporate Services)) and Ms Cooke (Corporate Director of Finance) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Shipton introduced the report which set out the draft budget proposals and provided Members with the opportunity to comment on the proposals before they were presented to Cabinet on 28 January 2019 and full Council on 14 February 2019.

Mr Shipton, Ms Cooke and Miss Carey (Cabinet Member for Customers, Communications and Performance) then responded to comments and questions from Members, including the following: -

- a) Mr Shipton said that council tax single person discounts were an increasing proportion of local authority council tax bases nationally. He said that he could provide further information to Members outside of the meeting in relation to council tax discounts.
- b) Mr Shipton referred to Kent County Council's Medium-Term financial planning and said that there was a significant amount of uncertainty around the matter. Government had committed to undertaking a review of relative needs and resources and expectations were that the review would be completed in time to inform the 2021 spending review. Ms Cooke reiterated Mr Shipton's comments and said that much work had been undertaken by Kent County Council's officers to seek to address spending pressures.
- c) Mr Shipton confirmed that the government were seeking ways in which to reduce the burden of business rates on businesses and were proposing to increase business rate retention to 75% from 2020. Ms Cooke reiterated Mr Shipton's comments in relation to business rate retention and said that although potential changes to business rates were entirely outside of Kent County Council's control, it added to the feel of uncertainty and could fundamentally change the rateable value of businesses across the country and significantly impact Kent's businesses and residents.
- d) Mr Shipton confirmed that Kent County Council had £10.8 million of corporate reserves and a further £3.4 million of directorate reserves which were available to stabilise the budget and smooth fluctuations on spending. Ms Cooke said that the directorate reserves were used to fund planned matters and were not used to solve directorate budget gaps.
- e) Mr Shipton said that Kent County Council's total planned capital spend for 2019/20 was £352 million, this was funded by government grants, capital receipts and developer contributions.
- f) Miss Carey (Cabinet Member for Customers, Communications and Performance) referred to the consultation on Kent County Council's revenue budget and council tax proposals which had been launched on 11

October 2018 and said that it was very well received, although there had been less support than in previous years for the social Care levy. She confirmed that the respondents mainly felt that Kent County Council should spend less money on Members allowances, reducing the number and/or salaries of senior managers and staff pay. She said that Kent County Council worked extremely hard to deliver vital services to Kent's residents and continued to protect and support vulnerable children and adults throughout the county.

- g) Ms Cooke expressed her views in relation to Brexit and said that Kent County Council were working with district colleagues, partners and relevant government departments to undertake a comprehensive analysis of potential costs that Kent County Council might incur due to Brexit and to secure additional funding.
- h) Mr Shipton said that he would send a copy of the letter that he had received from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in relation to ESFA funding to Members of the Committee outside of the meeting.

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

131. Asset Management - Oakwood House

(Item 6)

- 1. Members of the Committee indicated that they would be referring to information contained within the exempt report and therefore consideration of this item was deferred to the exempt part of the meeting (Minute 136 below refers).

132. Corporate Risk update - arrangements for update and review in relation to Brexit

(Item 7)

Mr Scrivener (Corporate Risk Manager and Interim Corporate Assurance Manager) and Mr Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance) were in attendance for this item.

- 1. Mr Whittle introduced the report which outlined how the risk register would be reviewed, updated and reported as the Brexit situation evolved.

Mr Scrivener and Mr Whittle then responded to comments and questions from Members, including the following: -

- a) Miss Carey (Cabinet Member for Customers, Communications and Performance) referred to Kent County Council's risk management process and confirmed that risks were delegated for management at all levels.
- b) Mr Whittle confirmed that he would liaise with colleagues within Kent County Council's Education department in relation to the Brexit Preparedness for Kent Schools briefing note that Members of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee received to find out how many schools had responded to the guidance that they had received.

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

133. Strategic and Corporate Service Directorate Performance Dashboard

(Item 8)

Mr Fitzgerald (Business Intelligence Manager - Performance) and Ms Spore (Director of Infrastructure) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Fitzgerald introduced the Strategic and Corporate Services Performance Dashboard which highlighted the progress that had been made against targets set for Key Performance Indicators.

Mr Fitzgerald, Mr Hotson (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services) and Ms Spore then responded to comments and questions from Members, including the following: -

- a) Mr Hotson started by referring to the annual net capital receipts target within the report and explained the reasons as to why the target had not been met. He said that robust plans were in place across Kent to alleviate pressures. Ms Spore added to Mr Hotson's comments in relation to capital receipts and said that the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee and the Property Sub-Committee had regular discussions on capital receipts to ensure that decisions relating to the matter were at the best interest of the Council which sometimes meant taking a longer-term view to secure the best value.
- b) Mr Hotson referred to the rent due to Kent County Council outstanding over 60 days target within the report and explained that the main reason for not meeting the target was tenants that did not pay their rent on time. Ms Spore added to Mr Hotson's comments in relation to the outstanding rent target within the report and said that although the figures regularly fluctuated, the overall direction of travel in terms of total rent outstanding was positive. She confirmed that the total amount of rent outstanding at 60 days was £61,000 and was at its lowest level that Kent County Council had had throughout the year. In relation to next steps, Ms Spore said that Kent County Council would continue to ensure that the information that tenants received was clear and concise to prevent late rent payments.
- c) Ms Cooke explained the reasons behind the red monthly indicator for invoices received by Accounts Payable within 30 days of Kent County Council's received date and highlighted the key work that had been undertaken to ensure that all officers within Cantium Business Solutions that were responsible for checking and approving invoices were aware of the deadlines by which they had to provide approvals for. She added that a routine report would be established for all budget holders within Cantium Business Solutions to make them aware of the invoices that were due and when they were due. Ms Cooke expressed her view in relation to the plans that had been put in place to ensure that the target could be achieved and was hopeful that a significant improvement would occur over the next three months.

- d) Ms Cooke confirmed that Cantium Business Solutions did not have the authority to process invoices on Kent County Council's behalf without the relevant budget holder's authority.
- e) Mr Watts referred to the report and presentation that was submitted to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee in November 2018 relating to Freedom of Information and said that there was a 10% increase in the number of Freedom of Information requests that Kent County Council had received in 2018/19 in comparison to the previous financial year. There had also been a decrease in the amount of resource that was available across the Council due to financial constraints. He reassured Members that robust plans had been put into place to ensure that the increase in Freedom of Information requests was at a manageable level and to improve the current Key Performance Indicator rating. He thanked all staff within Governance and Law for continuing to manage Freedom of Information requests and Subject Access requests so efficiently.
- f) Miss Carey commended the work that had been undertaken by officers within Governance and Law to significantly improve the Subject Access request rating within the report. Miss Carey reiterated Mr Watts' comments in relation to the increase in Freedom of Information requests in 2018/19, however a large number of these questions had come from a small number of serial enquirers.
- g) Mr Watts confirmed that the Governance and Law Activity Indicators within the report referred to formal meetings of the Council.
- h) Ms Spore said that it was important to ensure that Kent County Council continued to make the best use of the assets and resources that were available and regularly review services and processes.
- i) Mr Watts explained the way in which repeat Freedom of Information requests were categorised.

2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

134. Work Programme 2019/20

(Item 9)

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2019/20 be noted.

135. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Exempt Items
(open access to minutes)

136. Asset Management - Oakwood House

(Item)

Ms Spore (Director of Infrastructure) and Ms Ripley (Head of Property Strategy and Commissioning) were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Spore introduced the report which outlined the asset review that had been undertaken in respect of Oakwood House, the preferred option and the next steps.
 - a) Ms Spore responded to comments and questions from Members in relation to Coroner Services.
2. RESOLVED that the report and comments from Members be noted.

137. Invicta Law - Update

(Item 10)

1. Mr Watts introduced the report which provided a further update for Members in relation to Invicta Law's commissioning arrangements and responded to comments and questions from Members.
2. Mr Long (Cabinet Lead for Traded Services) said that it was important to set realistic targets and regularly monitor progress made.
3. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

138. 19/00010 - Agilisys Contract

(Item 11)

Miss Rankin (Cabinet Member for Strategic Commissioning), Ms Beer (Corporate Director of Engagement, Organisation Design and Development) and Mr Godfrey (Strategic Commissioner) were in attendance for this item.

1. Miss Carey (Cabinet Member for Customers, Communications and Performance) and Mr Godfrey introduced the report which set out the proposed extension to the Agilisys contract until 8 December 2025 on revised terms.

Mr Godfrey and Ms Beer then responded to comments and questions from Members, including the following: -

- a) Mr Godfrey confirmed the annual value of the Agilisys contract.
 - b) Mr Godfrey said that the current Agilisys contract was due to expire in December 2021.
 - c) Ms Beer talked about staff retention within the Agilisys call-centre in Barking and operating costs.
2. RESOLVED that the decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Customers, Communications and Performance to extend the contract with Agilisys until 8 December 2025 on revised terms, be endorsed.