

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room - Sessions House on Thursday, 7 March 2019.

PRESENT: Mr A M Ridgers (Chairman), Mr S Holden (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P M Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr A Booth, Mr A Cook, Mr G Lymer, Mr P J Messenger, Mr S C Manion, Mr J Wright, Mr D Farrell and Mr A J Hook

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M C Dance and Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport) and Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

129. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Bowles, Mr Chittenden and Mr Homewood.

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

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest received.

131. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2019

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting on 10 January 2019 are a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

132. Verbal updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 5)

1. Mr Hill, OBE (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) informed the Committee of his attendance at:
 - (a) The Turner Contemporary Exhibition on 26 January 2019 which staged a majority of work from Katie Paterson, paired with a group of works by JMW Turner. Mr Hill commended the exhibition and expressed his delight in regard to the large number of attendees;
 - (b) The Kent School Games Cultural Celebration on 3 March 2019 which showcased the artistic talent of young performers in the region. It was the first

time that the event had showcased performers across Kent using a feature-length film, opposed to the annual on-stage presentation. Mr Hill commended the films production, its ability to capture the strength and inspirational talent of young performers and agreed (with approval from the Chairman) to bring the shortened version of the film to a future Committee; and

- (c) The Gulbenkian Theatre's 50th anniversary celebrations where he was invited to speak. Mr Hill said that the theatre and University of Kent continued to be significantly powerful partners with the Kent County Council Arts Unit and was thankful for the opportunity to be part of such an event.
2. Mr M Dance (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) provided an update to the Committee on the following:
- (a) Mr Dance and the Chairman of the Council had visited a number of successful and inspirational businesses across the county, one of which was primarily an internet drive business and had managed to enhance its revenue over a ten-year period from an income of £1 million a year to £100 million a year. Supplementary to this, Mr Dance in conjunction with the Corporate Director of GET, attended a further meeting with a number of business across Kent to listen to the issues and challenges faced by many organisations. Mr Dance referred to one company in particular, AC Goatham & Son, the UK's largest producer of apples and pears and which managed 28 farms across Kent. One of the key topics discussed was the issue around the Seasonal Agriculture Workers Scheme and whether Brexit would have an impact on seasonal labour. Mr Dance paid tribute to the representatives of Visit Kent, Locate in Kent and Produced in Kent for their continued support in improving Kent's economy.
3. The Cabinet Members and Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport responded to comments and questions as follows:
- (a) In response to queries regarding the resignation of the Vice-Principal of Hadlow College and how this would impact Kent County Council, Mr Dance acknowledged that when any individual resigns from an organisation there would undoubtedly be a transition period that would bring about change, however, this was yet to be debated. In terms of the audit pathway, Kent County Council were completely separate, there had previously been shared elements of HR and some back-office support, however, this could be subsumed elsewhere.
 - (b) Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport) addressed queries regarding staff contingency plans for Kent County Council and assured Members that all teams across Kent County Council had been tasked with producing a business continuity plan which looked at all possible eventualities as a result of Brexit, the impact of those on the service and ways in which teams could continue to effectively deliver those services after 29 March. Some teams had taken the decision to not have annual leave (particularly Highways Officers) for the April Period and to allow staff to take

their leave later on in the year as it would be impractical to have all staff off when running a 24-hour service.

(c) In response to concerns regarding the public audit mitigation work, Mrs Cooper said that the Kent Resilience Forum, consisting of all category 1 responders across Kent (Blue light services, District and Borough Councils, NHS, Highways England etc.), was responsible for reviewing all potential risks that would be caused by Brexit. This included issues around traffic management, cyber security issues, counter terrorism; and this evidence would be taken from the latest horizon data provided by Her Majesty's Government and applied to scenarios in Kent. Kent County Council as a participant of the Kent Resilience Forum would then incorporate the findings into risk assessments around staff, annual leave and how best to manage services.

(d) With regard to whether the Kent Business Rate Retention Pilot would provide funding to Eurotunnel, Mrs Cooper acknowledged Members interests, however, informed the Committee that Kent County Council could not provide an answer.

4. RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted, with thanks.

133. Performance Dashboard

(Item 6)

Richard Fitzgerald (Business Intelligence Manager, Performance, Strategic Business Development & Intelligence) and Helen Page (Interim Head of Countryside and Community Development) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Fitzgerald introduced the Performance Dashboard which showed progress made against targets set for Key Performance Indicators (KPI) up to the end of December 2018. Mr Fitzgerald informed the Committee that the targets and KPI's were set on an annual basis and that the targets within the current Dashboard reflected those set and agreed by the Committee in 2018 through the Business Plan process. Following the implementation of the Strategic Delivery Plan, targets and KPI's would no longer go through the same governance process and would instead be generated in coalition with the newly adopted Strategic Delivery Plan. Members would have a chance at the next Committee in May to comment on the new mechanisms in place for approving KPI's and targets.
2. Mrs Page referred to the Environment, Planning and Enforcement KPIs and provided Members with a brief summary and reasoning for the red indicators, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report. With regard to EPE19, Mrs Page informed the Committee that a further month's data had been received since publication of the report and confirmed that the KPI had achieved a RAG rating of amber. Mrs Page affirmed her confidence that the EPE targets, although challenging, would be achieved by the end of the 2019.
3. Mr Pearson referred to the red KPI for the Libraries, Registrations and Archives service which related to number of people using outreach services which was

mainly the Home Library Service. He said that work was due to be undertaken to review the current KPI's to capture customer satisfaction levels as well as customer access levels and that in regard to the home library service, satisfaction would be a better measure. Mr Pearson said that the new LRA strategy offered new opportunities for the services to look at their performance measures and said that LRA were keen to engage with Mr Fitzgerald to identify new targets.

4. The officers responded to comments and questions as follows:
 - (a) In response to queries regarding the decline in library visits, Mr Pearson assured the Committee that library access levels were continuously monitored, however, there had been a decline in visits and this was backed by national trends. The summer period would often see increased library usage due to the summer reading challenge and increased student usage due to exams. However, Mr Pearson assured Members that trends would continue to be monitored and presented to the Committee.
 - (b) With regard to the number of weddings in Kent, Mr Pearson said that there had been an increase in sites applying for a licence to perform and host wedding ceremonies which has had a positive impact in terms of economic growth for Kent. However, in response to queries regarding the social change in civic ceremonies and whether this had impacted on the national trend, Mr Pearson agreed to liaise with the LRA and respond to Members directly with the requested data.
5. Mr Pearson paid tribute to the entire ceremonies team and wholly commended staff for their continued professionalism and positive work that has changed people's lives.
6. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

134. Risk Management: Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate (Item 7)

Mark Scrivener (Corporate Risk Manager) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Scrivener introduced the report that set out the strategic risks relating to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee. He advised Members that a majority of risks would have been discussed at the relevant Committees throughout the year and embedded within core business. Full details of the corporate risks were summarised in Appendix 1.
2. RESOLVED that the risks presented in the report be noted.

135. 19/00019 - Regional Growth Fund Administrative Changes and Transfer of Funds (Item 9)

David Smith (Director of Economic Development) and Martyn Riley (Economic Development Officer) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Smith introduced the report that set out the proposed decision to transfer to East Sussex County Council the authority to administer and manage funds recovered via the Regional Growth Fund Escalate Programme, through its East Sussex Invest 5 Scheme.
2. Supplementary to this, Mr Riley said that under the original Kent and Medway Business Fund, there was no demand from companies, Kent County Council or East Sussex County Council to operate a jointly managed fund outside the geographical boundaries of Kent and Medway. Therefore, the most practical option would be for Kent County Council to transfer recovered loan repayments from East Sussex recipients to East Sussex County Council for them to manage future reinvestments in local companies.
3. RESOLVED that the proposed decision (19/00019) to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development to:
 - (a) agree that administration of and funding-decision authority for the monies previously recovered from companies based in East Sussex and handled via the Escalate Scheme, be transferred to East Sussex County Council for management via their East Sussex Invest 5 scheme; and
 - (b) that authority be delegated to the Director of Economic Development to take appropriate actions, including but not limited to, entering into legal agreements as necessary to implement this decision.

be endorsed.

136. 19/00012 - Decision on the Libraries, Registration and Archives Strategy including Proposal for a New Library Tiering Model

(Item 8)

James Pearson (Head of Libraries, Registration & Archives) and Jacki Taylor-Smith (Strategic Manager Business Development Libraries, Registration and Archives) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr M Hill, OBE (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) introduced the report that summarised the results of the recent public consultation on the draft three-year Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) Strategy and its proposals to review library opening hours through a new tiering model.
2. Mr Pearson and Mrs Taylor-Smith presented a series of slides that summarised the results of the public consultation, the changes proposed as a result of the consultation and the proposed strategy for implementation which had been produced using an evidenced based approach to ensure fairness to all library services across the county.
3. The Chairman commended the Libraries, Registration and Archives service for managing to retain all 99 libraries and continuing to meet local demands whilst tasked with delivering revenue savings.

4. Mr Rayner (Member for Malling West) attended the meeting and thanked Mr M Hill for the reallocation of the Hildenborough library from tier five to tier four following representations made in January 2019. However, in relation to the proposed tiering model and the impact of reduced opening hours on the Borough Green library centre, Mr Rayner addressed the detrimental impact of this on service users and put forth the positive proposals from representatives on the Kent Association of Local Councils (Borough Green, Wrotham, Ightham, Plaxtol, Platt) to:
 - (a) review the allocated tiering; and
 - (b) provide replacement funding from the aforementioned Parish Councils to substitute lost central government and retain the existing library opening hours.
5. The officers and Cabinet Member responded to comments and questions as follows
 - (a) In response to Mr Rayner's proposal to review the tiering for Borough Green library, Mr Hill confirmed that the data on the usage of Borough Green library did not support the request at the current point in time, however, assured the Committee that the Library, Registration and Archives service would continue to undergo constant review and that the LRA Strategy would be reviewed at regular intervals. In response to Mr Rayner's proposal to provide replacement funding through Parish Council contributions, Mr Hill advised the Committee that following the meeting between Mr Rayner, Mr Pearson and himself, it was agreed that further work needed to be done to ascertain the wider implications of the proposal in terms of Human Resources, staffing and the possible risks involved should Parish Council revenue cease to exist. Mr Hill said that Kent County Council works in close partnership with the Parish Councils to support the Libraries, Registration and Archives Service and agreed to review Mr Rayner's proposal in due course following the implementation of the three-year LRA strategy.
 - (b) With regards to the consultation criteria and whether this measured areas of social deprivation, Mr Pearson said that the 'need' data collated as part of the consultation criteria was key to determining where libraries should be located, and the proposed new strategy ensured retention of all 99 existing libraries to meet local demands. The strategy would be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation and was due to return to the Committee in 2021.
 - (c) In response to queries regarding the £90k additional savings from LRA non-staffing budgets, Mr Pearson said that funding had been reduced in areas of the library service including the modernisation of the LRA building spaces and IT infrastructure to create savings and new opportunities were being explored around mobile vehicles to produce further savings. Mr Pearson assured the Committee that the reductions did not affect staffing, library materials or funding for books. Mrs Taylor-Smith said that the LRA service continued to work with its colleagues in asset utilisation to discover innovative ways of delivering a number of services under one roof.

6. Mr Hill paid tribute to all staff members within the Libraries, Registration and Archives service and their continued exemplary effort.
7. RESOLVED that the proposed decision (19/00012) to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to adopt the 3-year strategy for Libraries, Registration and Archives and implement the proposal to tier libraries and introduce a new opening hours model across the county, specifically to:
 - (a) adopt the 3-year LRA strategy subject to changes being included as outlined in this report,
 - (b) implement the library tiering model and progress to local engagement regarding the pattern of opening hours for each library,
 - (c) delegate the decision on the exact opening hours for each library to the Libraries, Registration & Archives Head of Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services; and
 - d) agree to a review of the tiering model on a 2-year cycle – with a report to this committee on any changes proposed.

be endorsed.

137. Supporting Kent Exporters

(Item 10)

David Smith (Director for Economic Development) and Steve Samson (Trade Development Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr M Dance (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) introduced the report which provided an update on the state of play for supporting Kent businesses with exporting and outlined the proposal for a trade and export development framework for Kent.
2. Mr Samson said that Kent County Council had worked closely with business support organisations and strategic partners for a number of years to boost Kent export levels and support Kent exporters under the 'Kent International Business (KIB)' business programme. Core export services provided in Kent included those offered by the Department for International Trade (DIT), Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise Europe Network as well as externally funded support programmes that provided micro-financing to help businesses with international trade. He informed the Committee that phase one of the SME internationalisation Exchange (SIE) project was due to be completed and that following a recent study of various export schemes, the KIB partners were looking to pilot 3 actions that were to be implemented during phase two of the Interreg project and drew members attention to annex 3 of the report.
3. The officer responded to comments and questions as follows:

- (a) Mr Samson said that one of the key objectives for Kent County Council was to streamline the current KIB support and provide a more staged journey to ensure that Kent businesses knew who they had to contact and at what stage this had to happen in their export journey. Queries into Kent County Council were often generated through businesses who had received an overseas enquiry and needed advice on how to proceed and who to contact.
- (b) In response to the proposed pilot actions in Kent, one of the interventions supported by the KIB partners was to provide greater internal resources for companies and this would be achieved through the Export Manager Scheme. The preferred option that Kent County Council had explored was to provide funding to companies that would then be used to appoint a trade and export specialist. This option would offer greater sustainability for companies in the future as it would allow them the option to appoint external or internal candidates with the latter ensuring that the specialist knowledge is contained in-house.
- (c) Mr Samson confirmed that companies used air freight to distribute products abroad but others used road haulage.
- (d) In response to EU Interreg funding, Mr Samson confirmed that funding for the SME Internationalisation Exchange (SIE) Project would expire at the end of December 2021 which would provide a 21-month period to test the proposed pilot actions. Supplementary to this, Mr Smith assured the Committee that SIE project covered 85% of the estimated costs of the proposed pilot support schemes and the remaining 15% was provided by Kent County Council through 'in-kind' staff time. Therefore, Kent County Council were effectively maximising impact primarily through organising businesses across Kent by providing them with a network data base of contacts to grow their export opportunities and not through financial expenditure. Mr Smith advised the Committee that the Government had promised further funding opportunities to support export-related opportunities, however details of this were pending following Brexit negotiations.
- (e) With regards to whether there would be increased demand on Kent County Council following the outcome of Brexit, Mr Samson said that that KIB partners were starting to prepare for the increased demand following Brexit, for example the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce were undertaking work to improve their process around customs paperwork which would compliment the export documentation work. Briefings were also due to be arranged for companies working with DIT. In terms of resources, Kent County Council's role would primarily be to sign post companies to the correct contact point and would heavily rely on the DIT to provide companies with the latest information. Kent County Council were in the process of exploring how best to communicate this message to key businesses.

4. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

138. District Visits Programme 2019

(Item 11)

David Smith (Director of Economic Development) and Rob Hancock (Programme Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Smith introduced the report that provided an update to Members on the future visits to Kent districts in 2019 and informed them of the revised dates for the Ashford and Tunbridge Wells visits. Mr Smith advised Members that the next planned visit was to Ebbsfleet on 10 May 2019 and asked Members, by show of hands, to confirm their interest in attending and sought Members approval to extend the invite to Members of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee.
 - (a) In response to a Members inquiry regarding the anticipated visit to Thanet, Mr Hancock informed the Committee that the visit was scheduled for 6 September 2019.
2. RESOLVED that the report be endorsed.

139. Work Programme 2019/20

(Item 12)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

140. Development of the Strategic Delivery Plan

(Item 13)

David Whittle (Director, Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance) and Elizabeth Sanderson (Strategic Business Adviser (Corporate), Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Chairman agreed to take an urgent item to allow for the discussion of the draft Strategic Delivery Plan.
2. Mr Whittle introduced the report that set out the Strategic Delivery Plan for Kent County Council which supported the delivery of the outcomes in the Strategic Statement. The Strategic Delivery Plan set out the significant activity that Kent County Council would need to deliver over the medium term and connected the strategy with resources and capacity required to ensure effective delivery at pace. Mr Whittle referred Members to the appendix of the report which provided a summary of the Strategic Delivery Plan and the core pieces of activity. Mr Whittle confirmed that the final version of the plan would be published on KNet once approved at the beginning April 2019. Mr Whittle welcomed questions from the Committee and offered Members an opportunity to discuss the rationale and structure of the Strategic Delivery Plan in greater depth outside of the Committee meeting should they wish.
3. The officer and Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport responded to comments and questions as follows:

- (a) Mrs B Cooper responded to Members queries regarding the lessons learned and the priorities going forward and said that the input from the Corporate Management Team and Corporate Directors had been integral to producing the suggested set of priorities for the GET Directorate and commended the new design of the business plan that managed to capture core business activity across the Council into one strategic document. Mrs Cooper said that the recent data collated from the staff survey evidenced that whilst staff enjoyed working within their roles, they were not aware of how their work fed into the bigger, organisational work of Kent County Council and the new Strategic Delivery Plan helped to address this.

- (b) Mr Whittle informed the Committee that as a result of the Strategic Delivery Plan, discussions had taken place between the Leader and Cabinet Members to review the necessity of producing a revised Strategic Statement to; reflect the stronger set of priorities at the top of the organisation which would then help to inform the business planning process for future years.

4. RESOLVED that the draft Strategic Delivery Plan summary be noted.