

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **24<sup>th</sup> January 2017**.

### **Present:**

Cllr. Chilton (Chairman)

Cllrs. Burgess, Heyes, Hicks, A. Howard, W. Howard, Link, Miss. Martin, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Cllr. Heyes attended as Substitute Member for Cllr Feacey, Cllr. Mrs Webb attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Adby and Cllr. Miss Martin attended as Substitute Member for Cllr. Krause.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Adby, Feacey, Krause, Michael.

### **Also Present:**

Cllr. Clokie, Shorter.

David Adams – Area Education Officer for South Kent (KCC), Head of Finance, Accountancy Manager, Principal Policy Planner, Policy & Performance Manager, Senior Policy, Performance & Scrutiny Officer, Member Services Officer.

## 270 Declarations of Interest

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Burgess	Made a “Voluntary Announcement” as the Chairman of the Planning Committee	273
Chilton	Made a “Voluntary Announcement” as Chairman of the Governors at Beaver Green Primary School and Director of Swale Academy Trust	272
Hicks	Made a “Voluntary Announcement” as Governor at Kingsnorth Primary School	272

## 271 Minutes

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 272 Education Provision in the Borough

David Adams the Area Education Officer for South Kent (from KCC) introduced this item and made a presentation to the Committee regarding the provision and resourcing of education in the Borough. The Presentation covered the following points:

- Birth rates across Ashford, Kent and nationally – where the figures demonstrated that Ashford's birth rate had exceeded both the county and the national rates over the last 24 years
- Early Years education, where the majority of provision was delivered by the private and voluntary sectors; where child minders provide one of the settings but parents tended to prefer nursery or pre-school provision and the impact of free provision, which was expected to double to 30 hours per week from September 2017
- Primary Education in Ashford and the mix of deliverers
- 2017/2021 Draft Commissioning Plan
- Progress in Implementing Proposals
- Forecast accuracy: KCC sought 5% surplus capacity across the whole estate but government funding was only for 2% surplus; and forecasting for Year R-6 places to 2020/2021
- Secondary Education in Ashford: the mix of deliverers and the forecast to 2022/2023
- Special School Provision including Specialist Resourced Provisions (SRPs) offering specialist places for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social Language and Communication Needs (SLCNs)
- Standards – Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and expectations on achievement
- Standards – KS1, KS2 and KS4 – comparisons between Kent figures and national figures
- NEETS – pupils Not in Education, Employment or Training
- Early Help and Preventative Services
- Commissioned Services (From December 2016)

The Chairman thanked David for his comprehensive presentation and opened up this item for discussion, and the following questions/comments were made:

- A Member asked how Special Provision in new schools would be implemented. David explained that the Provision could take the form of a satellite facility or be in fixed accommodation. Additional facilities and staff would be funded by revenue capital.
- A Member enquired what, if any, risk assessments were undertaken with regard to privately run Early Years providers. David explained that KCC's Business Development Team were able to provide advice but there was no due diligence for private companies and previous funding to help sustain private Early Years providers had now ceased.
- One Member commented that there was increased responsibility being placed upon School Governors and a lack of volunteers for the job. He was

concerned that the problem was not being addressed across the county. David agreed that it could be a very rewarding task and there were recruitment campaigns in place and it was expected that different models of Governance would be explored in the future. In response to a question on what ABC could input, David said that it would be helpful to encourage professional people to make a voluntary commitment to being a governor.

- One Member questioned why if a school changed its status to an Academy was it not then graded, and why there were fewer secondary schools in the borough performing at a “good” level or above. David responded that any previous grading fell away once a school converted to an Academy. KCC still undertook advisory visits and could offer a view on the School’s performance. He explained also that more primary schools in Ashford were Authority led and KCC had less direct influence on Secondary Schools since they were reviewed under a comprehensive Inspection Framework.
- Members discussed the predicted shortfall in secondary school places and concerns were raised that there was reliance on Housing Developers for the construction of new Schools. David explained that the annual school census formed part of the National Budget Process but since public funding had decreased, KCC were increasingly dependent on other parties moving forward. Currently there was a Local Distribution Formula in place but this was moving towards a National Funding Formula, and there would inevitably be regional variations. He went on to say that despite these obstacles, KCC were confident that the shortfall would be met.
- One Member referred to the new Further Education College in Ashford and asked what the expectation was on intake at the college. David explained that some students upon completing their GCSE’s desired a new educational setting but that generally two thirds remained at their school sixth form. The College would also be able to cater for NEET students and KCC did not anticipate a marked decrease in school sixth form intake.

**Resolved:**

**That the opportunity to assist local schools through Governorships should be publicised amongst Council members and staff**

## **273 Developing infrastructure to support Ashford’s Growth**

The Principal Policy Planner introduced this item and explained that the purpose of the briefing was to outline the requirements of infrastructure planning for the Local Plan, what process had been gone through to date and what the next steps were in terms of providing an update to the Infrastructure Plan. The key purpose of infrastructure planning was to demonstrate that the Local Plan was deliverable. She said that the Planning Policy team had liaised closely over the last few years with infrastructure providers and different scenarios had been tried and tested. Some stakeholders were more adept to providing the necessary information than others,

for example KCC, compared with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who were yet to provide detailed requirements on infrastructure needs.

The Chairman opened up the item for discussion and the following questions/comments were made:

- Members asked what could be done to influence the CCG's. The Principal Policy Planner explained that recent progress had been made and the necessary outputs were expected over the coming months. If this was not forthcoming then engagement from Members could be helpful.
- One Member expressed concern that development was too heavily focussed in rural areas and that improvements to the core of Ashford were being overlooked.
- A Member noted that the information provided in the Infrastructure Development Schedule Plan at the last Committee meeting in November was out of date and asked how up to date the document was. The Principal Policy Planner confirmed that the document had been published in May 2016 and was up to date at that point in time. The Planning Team were currently re-engaging with providers to update the Infrastructure Plan to take into account changes to the draft Local Plan following the consultation in 2016, and an updated version would be published alongside the next Local Plan consultation.
- A Member raised concern regarding the priority levels that had been given to some projects. The Principal Policy Planner explained that the priorities were assigned in relation to the need of the project to directly deliver the jobs and homes set out in the Local Plan.
- A Member commented about the impact of new development where infrastructure had not been provided appropriately and existing communities were affected, for example by power outages.
- Members discussed whether issues surrounding infrastructure resulting from the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group should be scrutinised by the O&S Committee. One Member suggested inviting infrastructure providers to the meeting to prove that they can meet the required expectations. The Chairman reminded the Committee that they had previously met with Southern and South Eastern Water companies, and had an initial discussion with KCC regarding Education. He suggested that a representative from the CCG be invited to a future meeting to engage with the Committee.

**Resolved that:**

- i) **further engagement be sought with Healthcare partners, with a representative from the CCG being invited to a future meeting of the Committee.**

- ii) That the Committee receive an update on infrastructure plans following the next revision of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

## 274 Report of Budget Scrutiny Task Group

The Chairman gave thanks to the Members of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group who had attended the meetings and the Finance Manager introduced the Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group. Management Team had considered the recommendations made by the Task Group and were pleased that the budget was considered both legal and achievable, but had made some further comments, which were included on a tabled paper. Members agreed with the rewording made by Management Team.

The Chairman went on to say that since several Councillors would be on holiday at the end of the year, consideration would need to be given with regards to recruiting Members to the next Budget Scrutiny Task Group.

**Resolved:**

**That the Cabinet :-**

- i) be advised that the O&S Committee regards the Council's draft 2017/18 budget as legal and achievable.
- ii) endorses the Service Plans and Risk Registers for each service.
- iii) requests that services include staff resource as a separate and individual risk within the Risk Register for each service.
- iv) enhances the consideration of staffing within the Strategic Risk Register.
- v) endorses the PID process to be a compulsory first step for determining the viability of all Council projects.
- vi) considers that an overview of progress made in delivering the Council's project programme be added as a regular item to the Cabinet and O&S Committee agendas.
- vii) agree the need for further consideration of cross-service and strategic interdependencies, to be taken forward by Management Team in liaison with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- viii) agree to continue the existing apprenticeship and graduate schemes in place across the Council and extend these where possible.

## **275 Future Reviews and Report Tracker and Topic Selection Flowchart**

The Chairman told the Committee that the Community Safety Partnership Annual Update would be given at the next meeting, as well as the Quarterly Performance Report. The following questions/comments were made:

Members considered that air quality and pollution were becoming a more critical issue in the Borough, and this topic should be reviewed sooner rather than later. The Senior Performance & Scrutiny Officer advised that he had been informed by Officers that they were in the process of compiling a strategy and that the O&S Committee would have pre-scrutiny on this before it went to Cabinet, most probably in the first quarter of the financial year.

**Resolved:**

**That the Report Tracker be received and noted.**

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