

Medway Council
Meeting of Regeneration, Community and Culture
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 31 January 2012

6.34pm to 8.40pm

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

- Present:** Councillors: Bright (Chairman), Griffin, Griffiths, Hicks (Vice-Chairman), Hubbard, Mackinlay, Osborne, Stamp and Turpin
- Substitutes:** Councillors:
Avey (Substitute for Adrian Gulvin)
Smith (Substitute for Juby)
Tolhurst (Substitute for Etheridge)
- In Attendance:** Councillor Mike O'Brien, Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer Contact
Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture
Tim England, Head of Safer Communities
Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director Development, Economy and Transport
Steve Griffiths, Kent Fire and Rescue Service
Jill King, Section 106 Officer
Andy McGrath, Assistant Director, Front Line Services
Maurice O'Reilly, Kent Probation
Caroline Salisbury, Democratic Services Officer

738 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 13 December 2011 was agreed and signed as correct by the Chairman.

739 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Etheridge, Adrian Gulvin, Juby and Maisey.

740 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

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741 Declarations of interest

Councillor Griffiths declared a personal interest to any reference to Medway Community Healthcare, as he is a non-executive director.

742 Kent Fire and Rescue Service - change in provision of services

Discussion:

The Director of Service Delivery at Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Steve Griffiths, gave a presentation to the committee which included:

- The improvement in availability of a part-time appliance (fire engine)
- The re-location to two new sites within Medway (to be announced soon), one to be near Rochester airfield and the other along Watling Street (A2) towards Chatham Maritime
- 94% of fires had been attended within 10 minutes and the average response time was 5-6 minutes
- 946 home safety visits had been completed
- 112 schools had been visited
- 2,000 young people had attended a "License to Kill" event (for young drivers)
- fire prevention remained the top priority for the service, in particular referrals to the elderly and vulnerable for home visits.

The committee asked for confirmation that the fire service would retain its station at Strood and was assured that the aim was to have three stations across Medway.

Members asked how the fire service promoted its campaign to carry out safety checks, and check and/or install smoke alarms in residential properties? The Director responded that there were targeted campaigns at care homes and carers for elderly and vulnerable people. Otherwise officers visited local fetes, fairs and other community events as part of the promotion. Members asked for information or leaflets about this service to be sent to them for use in their ward work.

Following questions about property arson and fires caused by electrical wiring faults, the Director advised that a third of domestic fires were caused by cooking, a third were by smoking and heating and a third by electrical appliances, such as tumble dryers and dishwashers but not the actual wiring in the property.

Decision:

The Director of Service Delivery at Kent Fire and Rescue Service was thanked for his presentation.

743 Kent Probation Service - prevention of future generations offending

Discussion:

A Director of Kent Probation Service, Maurice O'Reilly, gave a presentation to the committee which included:

- the definition of domestic abuse, together with figures of the numbers of male and female perpetrators and victims
- Kent Probation workload currently stood at 4,500 (75%) offenders located within the community and 1,500 (25%) in custody
- 'Prospects for Success' women's project – this had been a very successful project with 12 women based in Chatham which the service hoped to now roll-out across Kent, for use as an alternative for offenders instead of entering the criminal justice system
- 'Place 1' – for short-term "revolving door" prisoners (offenders who serve a high level of short sentences and immediately re-offend on release from prison.) This project, together with a number of partners, escorted offenders from prison and immediately linked them into accommodation, benefits and job interviews to prevent re-offending
- 'Place 2' – for families with intergenerational involvement with agencies and others. The partnership working on this project had identified 9-10 problem families in the Medway area with multiple agencies/services working with them, where there was likely to be duplication and crossover of work by the agencies and where there was or had been inter-generational agency involvement including offending
- future work for the Probation service included engagement with the health service
- the government's "Troubled Family" agenda.

The committee briefly discussed the "Circles" project for sex offenders and funding for high-risk sex offenders.

The Director was asked for further information on the 'Place 2' project and informed Members that a number of meetings had been held between the police, social care, housing and the probation service where 500 – 600 families known to the agencies had been considered and 9-10 families chosen for this project. However, the health service had been absent from these discussions but a meeting had now been arranged to update the service on the work carried out to date. The committee was advised that now the families had been identified, the partnership needed to look at ways of taking the project forward. The government had recently announced its "Troubled Families" project with funding of £200 million. The project would submit a bid to this fund and Medway Council's Assistant Director, Inclusion and Performance, was leading on this.

The Director was asked what work was being carried out for male offenders outside of the projects mentioned above. He advised that the government had made the priority clear – to reduce re-offending. Kent Probation service was looking at making this more focussed and looking at offenders committed to change their ways. Other offenders would be managed by reducing the risk of

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them re-offending, which involved work with other agencies. There were 40-50 probation officers engaged with these offenders but not for 24 hours a day and the local community and extended family of the offender were able to help with this, as the service needed to engage whatever resource it could.

Decision:

The Director of Kent Probation Service was thanked for his presentation.

744 Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer First in attendance

Discussion:

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer First, Councillor O'Brien, gave a presentation to the committee which included:

- A variety of enforcement operations carried out with the police
- Community clean-up campaigns
- Partners & Communities Together (PACTs)
- Schools and Communities Together (SACTs)
- Flytipping
- Medway Community Alcohol Partnership (MCAP) – working on underage sales and enhanced training packages for traders
- 'Eat Out Well' campaign
- CCTV – recently assisted police with two major arrests. Medway now operated Gravesham and Maidstone Borough Council's CCTV coverage (and already covered Swale)
- 'Love Medway' app
- Emergency planning.

The committee requested further information about the 'Eat Out Well' campaign and the Portfolio Holder advised that this campaign was at an early stage and the details were still to be considered. Members also asked about the teething problems with the Love Medway app and were assured that these had been resolved.

The Portfolio Holder was asked about the Medway Community Alcohol Partnership and when this would be rolled out across Medway? He replied that where small shop holders had problems with underage sales, they were being given advice to overcome these challenges. Ward Councillors would be advised as and when this project was taking place in their ward.

Members asked about the recent restructure within the Police service and how this affected the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) to be based within neighbourhood teams. Councillor O'Brien advised that during the re-structure several neighbourhood police models had been produced, one of which excluded PCSOs from Medway. However, he had argued against this and Medway had benefitted with longer cover until 3am and neighbourhood

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teams located in all High Streets. There would also be one dedicated PCSO for each ward and the number of Police officers within Medway had increased.

Members asked what additional functions had been transferred to the neighbourhood teams following the restructure and also how many PCSOs in total would be located in Medway? The Portfolio Holder advised that a recent presentation given by Kent Police on the restructure of their service would answer these questions and that he would send a copy of that presentation to all Members of the committee. He also advised that there had been 66 PCSOs prior to the restructure. There was then to be none but this had been re-visited and there would now be 36 PCSOs located in Medway.

The Portfolio Holder was asked whether the CCTV system was now at full capacity and he responded that there was still the capability to cover another two council's areas.

A Member asked about poor air quality conditions in certain parts of Medway, as his ward seemed to have particular problems. The Portfolio Holder advised that he took air quality very seriously and that a report had been submitted to the committee for consideration some time ago. He advised that he would arrange for a copy of the report to be sent to the Member for information.

Decision:

The Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer First was thanked for his presentation.

745 Community Infrastructure Levy

Discussion:

The Assistant Director, Development, Economy and Transport, introduced the report. He advised that currently the council collected contributions from developers via section 106 agreements and the "Developer Contributions Guide" which was a supplementary planning document. This guide set out what a developer could expect to fund for various services in order to meet the impact of a development of 10 dwellings or more.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would replace most of these contributions sought via section 106 agreements, by introducing an overall levy which would seek to fund infrastructure in Medway. An infrastructure plan would be produced to include highway improvements, flood defences, parks, leisure, etc. but affordable housing would not be funded by the new levy. The process of developing a CIL for Medway would be a long one, including public consultation and an examination in public by an inspector, but it was anticipated to be ready for adoption by late 2013 or early 2014. A copy of the draft plan would be submitted to the committee for consideration prior to public consultation.

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The committee asked whether the levy completely replaced section 106 legal agreements? The Assistant Director responded that most section 106 agreements would be replaced by the levy, but a few exceptions remained, the principal one being affordable housing.

Members also asked about the information in paragraph 2.19 of the report. Under the Localism Act, a proportion of the levy raised would be allocated back to the neighbourhood where it had originated. If this was located within a parish, then the Parish Council could decide the neighbourhood area where these monies would be spent. However, in urban areas, where there were no Parish Councils, how would a 'neighbourhood' be recognised? The Assistant Director responded that he was looking into how other councils had dealt with this and no decision had yet been made about how Medway would arrange this. He advised that in other authorities approximately 5% of the levy raised was returned to be spent within the neighbourhood.

The committee also asked about developers being able to pay the whole levy prior to commencement of the development, as section 106 agreements were often paid in instalments at various stages of the project. If the levy was more substantial than previous agreements, developers might have problems making the full payment. The Section 106 officer advised that developers would receive training, but the onus was on developers to inform the council on commencement of the project. The council then will issue a liability notice for payment within 60 days. The council could introduce a payment plan but this must apply to all developers. Members would be involved throughout this process through the Cabinet's Local Development Framework (LDF) Advisory cross-party group.

Some Members voiced their concern at the potential for some areas of Medway to miss out on improvements this levy could provide and the possibility that the process could be open to political manipulation. The Section 106 officer responded that there would be an obligation for the council to publish annually the monies received through the CIL and where the money had been spent. The Assistant Director added that he anticipated that a report would be submitted to this committee on an annual basis which would include where, and what, the levy monies had been spent on.

Decision:

The committee endorsed the work on preparing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to enable this council to become a CIL Charging Authority, in consultation with other Kent authorities.

746 Petitions

Discussion:

The committee considered the report.

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Decision:

The committee noted the petition responses and appropriate officer action in paragraph 3 of the report.

747 Work Programme

Discussion:

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report advising that there were no new items on the Cabinet's Forward plan within the remit of this committee. Members were also advised that a Briefing Note had been published with regard to the increase in powers for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

Decision:

The committee noted the report.

Chairman

Date:

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