

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

**27 January 2009**

Present: Councillor Bayford (Chairman); Councillors, Crotty, Day, Harrison, Hayton, Jarvis, Johnston, Lawson, Nottingham, Mrs Rogers, Scobie and Watkins.

Other Cllrs in Attendance:

Councillor Gideon was invited by the Panel for Item 5 of the Agenda

Councillor Campbell spoke under 24.1

### **R211 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies were received for Councillors Bruce, Mrs Roberts and Mrs Pickering. Councillor King substituted for Councillor Mrs Pickering.

### **R212 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest or whipping instructions were made.

### **R213 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 25 November 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **R214 MINUTES FROM EAST KENT JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND ITS SUB-COMMITTEES**

The confirmed minutes of the East Kent Waste Management Sub-Committee [date] and the draft minutes of the East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee [date] were noted.

### **R215 PRESENTATION FROM COUNCILLOR GIDEON, CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, HEALTH AND SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Cllr Gideon introduced the agenda item before Colin Maclean made a presentation on the topic. Mr. Maclean is seconded to Thanet District Council by Kent County Council as the Thanet Works Director. He focussed on the origins, aims, targets and priorities of the Working Neighbourhood Fund also known as Thanet Works (refer to Annex 1). He said that the Fund was to target deprived areas as priority but indicated that all the unemployed in the District could benefit from the new programme. An additional £41,953 would top up the original £4million Fund because there had been an error in calculating the original figure for disbursement. The funding was for the period 2008/11.

The aim of the Fund was to challenge and improve aspirations of children and families who traditionally did not view seeking and securing employment as being within their reach. He said that Thanet Works would target people of working age who are on out of work benefits (Jobcentre Plus) and would also aim to increase the proportion of the population qualified to at least level 2 of LSC, increase the number of adult learners achieving a level 1 qualification in literacy (KCC) and reducing the level of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (KCC). Thanet Works was going to challenge the way providers of employment, education and training worked.

Cllr Gideon then took over the second part of the presentation and reported on progress to date. Discussions had taken place with a number of partners and the Cabinet had approved the programme in August 2008. The structure of the programme had been worked out and that the first phase of Thanet Works was going to be commissioned in February 2009. The business community was involved and Phase One of implementation would have about £1 million disbursement. Thereafter the funding would be utilised in response to the demands to be set out in a new strategy. Entrepreneurs need to come up with innovative project proposals that would generate employment as this programme

would be employer-led. She indicated that the Fund might help unlock other forms of funding for the district.

Members wanted to know what mechanisms there were for ensuring that the funding was spread across all intended communities. Jobcentre Plus was one of the partners and these partners would employ a holistic and district-wide approach and a shared agenda when dealing with their respective customers. All bids submitted for funding would be challenged for viability and innovation and that the Fund was not going to duplicate what was already in place. The Leadership Group for Thanet Works would champion the programme aims and objectives. The Working Neighbourhoods Fund would go through a trial run of six to twelve months.

Members questioned the Fund strategy and said that Thanet Works should be community-led rather than employer-led. Cllr Gideon indicated that the strategy was not yet firmed up and should allow employer and community-led approaches, but this first stage was focusing more on employer-led initiatives. Members suggested that there were few local positive role models that are celebrated by local communities. They also said that there was a culture of seasonal employment in the district that required addressing and that the business community should be challenged to employ more female employees.

Cllr Gideon indicated that a project proposal on Childcare for working single mothers would challenge that tradition and would therefore be welcomed as an innovative proposal. Recessions usually brought communities together to pull through the crisis and this programme would create opportunities for champions of innovative ideas for employment creation for those children and families who traditionally do not have the motivation to seek employment. If it wished, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel could participate in a focus group firming up the strategy in the coming year.

## **R216 GUIDANCE ON UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT AND OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

Donna Reed said that whilst the majority of complaints received by the Council were genuine and received a thorough investigation, there was need to agree a policy on vexatious complaints to manage the nuisance caused by a few persistent complainants; this policy would give a standardised structure to handling such situations. Each service would have to put in a case for designating a complaint as vexatious which would ultimately be decided by the Monitoring Officer.

Members observed that while this was a good idea, officers should also ensure that genuine complaints raised by Councillors on behalf of their constituents were dealt with expeditiously. Donna Reed said a management system would be set up to track Members' queries.

The Panel supported the policy, subject to an amendment that there be a review after six months of implementation to determine the effectiveness of the policy and a further report presented to the Panel.

## **R217 REPORT OF THE AIRPORT WORKING PARTY**

Cllr Harrison, the Chairman of the working party, said that the group went on field visits to Bristol and Bournemouth where they were shown how the two airports operated. The group was shown evidence on how airports can create employment as well as the measures that can be taken to mitigate the noise pollution. The group was also shown how the two airports manage the night time flying policy. He reported that the group would be meeting to write their report for formal presentation to the Panel meeting on 10 March 2009.

The report was noted.

**R218 REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 08/09 AND REPORTS FROM OSP WORKING GROUPS**

The Corporate Improvement & Budget Working party reported that the Council Vision was still going through the consultation process which would lead to the final approval by Council. The Asset Management Working Party reported that the Council had not yet raised any money from the planned asset disposals. The Museums Working Party reported no progress and they were requested by the Panel to present a progress report at the next Panel meeting. The Recycling Working Party reported that they were going to meet on 28 January 2009. Members raised concerns regarding the difficulties they faced when they tried to make arrangements for their informal group meetings. The Panel Chairman said that a planning meeting had been set up to look into ways of making the scrutiny function more effective and valued in Council.

Members suggested that a replacement for Cllr Nottingham be sought even from outside the Panel to team up with Cllr Mrs Rogers in the Allotment Working Party. The Thanet Works Working Party reported that they were still to meet. Councillors Mrs Rogers and Crotty were the additional Members to the Landlord Services Working Party. The Group was going to meet on 9 February 2009. The Equalities Working Party was going to meet on 16 February 2009. The Sustainable Community Strategy Working Party was still to meet.

The reports were noted.

**R219 FORWARD PLAN**

The significant changes were noted.

The meeting ended at 9.18 pm.