

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST KENT (JOINT SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE** held at the Dover District Council on Thursday 14 January 2010 at 9.30 am.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor G Cowan (Dover District Council)

Councillors: A Clifton-Holt (Shepway District Council)
M D Conolly (Dover District Council)
M Harrison (Thanet District Council)
D R Lloyd-Jones (Dover District Council)
A Perkins (Canterbury City Council)
T Prater (Shepway District Council)
B Rogers (Thanet District Council)
J Samper (Canterbury City Council)
R Tillson (Shepway District Council)
M Tomlinson (Thanet District Council)
C Windsor (Canterbury City Council)

Officers: Chief Executive (Canterbury City Council)
Chief Executive (Dover District Council)
Chief Executive (Shepway District Council)
Chief Executive (Thanet District Council)
Head of Finance and ICT (Dover District Council)
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Canterbury City Council)
Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation (Thanet District Council)
Assistant Head of Democratic Services (Canterbury City Council)
Democratic Support Officer (Dover District Council)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Goddard, J Roberts, I Thomas and M Vye.

20 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with the Operating Arrangements, Councillors M Tomlinson, R Tillson and C Windsor had been appointed as substitutes for Councillors J Roberts, C Goddard and I Thomas respectively.

21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 December 2009 were approved as a correct record subject to the replacement of the word "consensus" with "majority" in the final paragraph and signed by the Chairman.

22 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE EAST KENT (JOINT ARRANGEMENTS) COMMITTEE

There were no items for consideration.

23 ITEMS PLACED ON THE AGENDA BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no items for consideration.

The Chairman advised the Committee that an additional paper had been circulated at the meeting and with the Committee's consent the meeting was adjourned until 9.50 am to allow Members the opportunity to read it.

On its resumption, the meeting heard from the Chief Executive of Shepway District Council on the nature of his authority's concerns over the reports proposals for joint services. It was emphasised that despite concerns over its participation, Shepway District Council would not seek to prevent any of the other East Kent authorities from progressing with closer joint working arrangements on the basis outlined in the report.

The Chief Executives for the other three East Kent authorities stated that due to uncertainty over the level of future central government funding for local government the existing model of two years to develop shared services proposals to fruition would not deliver the required savings in time to avoid significant budgetary pressures arising.

It was stated that a series of checks and balances had been established by the proposals that would ensure democratic involvement in decision-making where there was a question as to whether a shared service would deliver savings for an authority. The involvement of Elected Members in service management would be on a similar basis to that where services had been contracted out with Members determining service levels.

The target level of saving to be achieved from sharing a service was 10% overall. It was acknowledged that this meant that individual authorities could save less or more than the 10% saving if the overall level of saving across all participating authorities was 10% or greater. In addition, in certain circumstances an authority might opt to receive a lower saving in order to achieve a greater level of service provision.

In response to questions from Members, the Committee was advised that the set-up costs for the proposed arrangements had yet to be identified but on the basis of the proposed staffing structure it was expected to be less than the £250,000 suggested. The expenditure on a Director of Shared Service cost would be a single year cost, as it would be funded from savings made through shared services after that. The Business Transformation Manager positions would be an internal appointment if a suitable candidate applied for the post and their existing work would be backfilled until the shared service was established.

The issue of exit arrangements from joint working was raised and it was acknowledged that once a service had been shared it would be difficult to withdraw from the arrangements once the staff members had been transferred to the shared service. At this point however, Members were only being asked to commit to the arrangements until 2011.

It was proposed by Councillor A Perkins and duly seconded

- (a) That the East Kent (Joint Scrutiny) Committee reaffirm its support for the resolution passed at its meeting held on 14 December 2010.
- (b) That while the East Kent (Joint Scrutiny) Committee supports the principal of joint working it cannot support the proposals for the following reasons:

- (i) The lack of information relating to actual costs.
- (ii) The lack of detail on how savings can be achieved.
- (iii) The concerns over democratic accountability.
- (iv) The prohibitive cost of exit from any individual shared service or shared service vehicle.
- (v) The lack of other options.

Councillor J Samper requested that the vote be recorded.

Councillor A Clifton-Holt	For	Councillor M D Conolly	Against
Councillor G Cowan	For	Councillor D R Lloyd-Jones	Against
Councillor M Harrison	For	Councillor B Rogers	Against
Councillor A Perkins	For	Councillor J Samper	Against
Councillor T Prater	For	Councillor M Tomlinson	Against
Councillor R Tillson	For	Councillor C Windsor	Against

On being put to the vote, there was an equality of six votes in favour and six votes against the proposal. In the absence of a provision in the operating arrangements for a Chairman's casting vote the proposal was LOST. The Chairman stated that had there been the option for a casting vote he would have voted for the proposal.

It would be reported to the East Kent (Joint Arrangements) Committee that the meeting of the East Kent (Joint Scrutiny) Committee was unable to reach agreement on the matter of the East Kent Joint Services – Strategic Case report.

The meeting ended at 11.55 am.