

## **Bold Steps For Kent - Consultation Draft**

### **Executive Summary**

An ambitious plan for extraordinary times

The financial savings that Kent County Council (KCC) must make over the next four years are huge. There are two ways of responding to this challenge. We can either “salami slice” every service we provide to the people of Kent, spreading the pain equally by downgrading all services. Or we can think big, seize this opportunity to redesign our services and fundamentally rethink what we do, how we do it and who we do it with, so that in four years’ time Kent emerges a stronger, more dynamic and self-confident county.

Thinking big – strategic and local

Kent will continue to be an outward looking county, with strong international links that place it at the forefront of public service thinking. Through the Thames Gateway, growth status and coastal regeneration we have the opportunity to become the most dynamic county in the country, supporting new economic growth, and delivering it more speedily than many major UK cities. Therefore we want any new powers proposed for cities to deliver services such as housing, skills and transport to be available to Kent, so we can deliver growth and prosperity for both the county and the country.

We also want to revise the county’s relationship with central government. For too long local government has been subject to central government diktat, overregulation and an inspection burden. Not only has this limited the freedom to bring local solutions to local problems, it has bred a dependency culture – dependency on Government for money, ideas and permission – and a stifling innovation and community resilience. The new Government has moved to cut the apron strings, but we want to go further. Our ambition is for Kent to become the first financially self-sufficient county in the country. Kent puts more money into central government coffers than we receive back by way of grant. We want to work with our partners across local government to develop an innovative proposal to Government whereby we would keep what we earn and use Kent money to solve Kent problems.

And we recognise that local problems are best solved at the local level. We want Kent to become the beacon for how localism can work in practice. KCC will move towards local place-based commissioning, with our services commissioned from at the district and borough level upwards by local KCC Members. We would also like our District and Borough Council partners, police, GPs and other public service partners to join us in local place-based commissioning so that we can move to a true Locality Board model encompassing the whole range of public services, saving money by responding to local need and better targeting local resources across the public sector.

Underpinning this is the need to ensure we meet the financial challenge head on, so that the finances of the County Council remain strong and robust. That means saving up to £330million over the next four years. There will be an absolute focus on making the County Council more efficient. We will re-examine every service we provide and ask some fundamental questions: is there a need to provide this service? Does it achieve what is in the interests of Kent residents? Can we sell this service to generate new income for Kent taxpayers? Are there different ways of providing this service? Can it be provided more efficiently by an alternative provider? This will not just be a one-off; every service will be continually challenged over the next four years to drive ever-greater value for money and outcomes.

As we answer these questions our services will change. Some services will cease. There will be more personalisation and a greater focus on personal budgets. KCC will deliver fewer services directly, with the private, voluntary and community sectors increasingly taking responsibility. The County Council's focus will be on identifying service outcomes and commissioning the provider – public, private or voluntary – that is best placed to provide these outcomes.

### Building new partnerships

At the heart of Bold Steps for Kent is the need to change the way we work, not only to improve our own services, but also to reflect the changing shape of wider public services. Increasingly, those directly responsible for delivering front line services will be empowered – particularly in health and education – to design and commission services that better fit the needs of parents, pupils and patients.

In education, KCC will still have an important role in ensuring that pupils and parents have access to high quality education provision, and we will continue to focus on driving up standards and improving education outcomes. We will concentrate on improving primary attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Schools are being granted more freedom to make decisions independent of the local authority, and we want to build a new relationship with schools to reflect this changing landscape. We will form a Kent Schools Association so that all schools in Kent, whatever their status, continue to have a strong and strategic voice at both county and national level, and discuss with schools the opportunities that exist for further devolving elements of the Dedicated Schools Grant retained by KCC to provide central services. We will also look to form a vehicle that will be able compete within the emerging market for school support services both within Kent and in other local authority areas.

In health, as in education, the focus of reform is on empowering GPs to be responsible for commissioning primary care for their patients. At the heart of this transformation is our responsibility to support GP consortia, through their commissioning plans, to open up the primary care market in Kent to new and innovative providers. For example, through the development of mutual trusts

or co-operates across a range of services - such as district nurse and mental health provision - we can increase choice and drive up standards. Without this increased choice, GPs will be forced to simply re-commission existing provision, and we will miss the opportunity to improve the quality of health services to the people of Kent.

This also presents significant opportunities to better join up and integrate health and social service provision to reduce both costs and avoidable demand on health and social care services. It also presents an opportunity for KCC to develop a support offer to GPs in their commissioning role by providing a range of functions, e.g. effective back office support, professional advice on commissioning processes, and undertaking joint or delegated commissioning with KCC. We are open to the form these arrangements will take, whether there is a need for a single countywide vehicle or more local arrangements to reflect local needs, but believe we can develop an attractive offer to support GP consortia in their new commissioning role.

The voluntary and community sector has a big role to play in the future delivery of public services and we want voluntary organisations to be as competitive as possible so they can compete for service contracts at a time when value for money is the imperative. We will shape our commissioning approach so that it is accessible and transparent to the voluntary and community sector, and explore different contracting models – e.g. call off arrangements to large voluntary organisations taking the role of ‘prime providers’ to sub-contract out work to smaller local groups – which can accommodate the whole spectrum of the voluntary sector across Kent.

#### Driving economic prosperity – unlocking Kent’s potential

Delivering the priorities set out in our Regeneration Framework will underpin our role in driving forward new economic growth over the next four years. We will continue to follow a sector-led approach to develop strong and effective relationships with key business sectors, building a better understanding of the needs of each so we can tailor our support to them. At the heart of our relationship with business will be the proposed Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) between Kent and Essex, which will have the gravitas to become one of the most influential partnerships in the country, allowing Kent and Essex to compete with City Regions for significant new investment. The LEP will focus three themes of delivering the Thames Gateway, supporting coastal regeneration and enhancing the rural economy. We must ensure that the huge opportunity of the Thames Gateway regeneration programme is delivered, given its potential to create 225,000 jobs over the next twenty years.

Kent business needs a highly skilled and motivated workforce if it is to compete globally, and we will work with the business community to help shape education and skills provision around the needs of the local economy. More Kent residents need to be equipped with higher level skills, generating higher salaries, and increasing spending power in the Kent economy. We will continue to support the expansion of apprenticeships as the best channel to

provide businesses with motivated, work ready young people with the skills needed to ensure Kent business succeed in national and international markets.

Delivering the infrastructure to support new development is critical, both to maximise the opportunity from new development but also to ensure that we do not place additional pressure on infrastructure and services already operating at full capacity. Central to this will be focusing on the big transport challenges facing Kent including the delivery of a third lower Thames Crossing to open up the Thames Gateway, relieving pressure on the Channel Corridor and delivering radical solutions to support regeneration opportunities in East Kent, in particular the development of Manston Airport through linking it directly to the High Speed 1 rail link.

#### Putting the citizen in control

In our drive to be a transparent organisation, we will give our residents the information they need to better hold us to account. This will include publishing salary and expenses for senior managers online, as well as performance and cost information for our services. We will expand the Kent Gateway programme, which provides a single point of access to the full range of public services in a single location, so that the Gateway approach is adopted by all our public facing facilities, and develop a single Gateway website and telephone number.

KCC has been at the heart of the personalisation agenda, particularly in adult social care, over the last ten years and we will continue to drive this agenda across all our services. Our aim is for residents to increasingly be able to choose how they access services. To this end we will expand the use of the Visa enabled Kent Card preloaded with an individuals' personal budget or cash alternative to KCC service delivery.

KCC will play its part in the shift towards developing the Big Society, building on our long tradition of supporting and working with the voluntary and community sector in Kent. We will establish a Big Society Fund for Kent. This will provide capital start up and project based funding for social enterprises. We will also work with the voluntary and community sectors to help them bid for public service contracts, especially where payment by results or access to working capital limits their ability to bid. This will potentially be in the form of facilitating access to that capital either directly from KCC or taking equity in social enterprises where it is mutually beneficial.

We also want to encourage the voluntary sector and social enterprises to supply KCC goods and services and we will ensure that our systems allow for wider public value judgments to be included in the assessment of tenders. We recognise that KCC is not the sole purveyor of new ideas and solutions. We want to harness the potential for innovation and new ways of thinking about future service provision and will introduce a 'right to bid' process allowing individuals or groups from the private, public or voluntary sector who have new ideas to research and test their proposals. KCC managers and

employees who have a business case that their service could be delivered as efficiently or effectively through arms length arrangements - i.e. management buyout or formation of a public service co-operative or mutual trust - can use the 'right to bid' process to have their business case considered.

### Tackling disadvantage

Tackling welfare dependency is absolutely critical to tackling disadvantage – getting people into productive employment so that they can help support themselves and their families. KCC has a strong track record on tackling worklessness through our Supporting Independence Programme (SIP) and we will align the SIP with the new single work programme being developed by the Department for Work and Pensions. Building on the work of the Margate Task Force, we will forge strong relationships with primary welfare-to-work providers in Kent to help deliver tailored support to tackle welfare dependency. In particular, we want to see social enterprise play a greater role in helping to reduce worklessness in Kent, and we will continue to prevent disengagement from education learning by supporting vocational and applied learning and promoting the take up of apprenticeships by Kent businesses.

We will continue to ensure the provision of the most robust public protection arrangements. The public rightly expects the most vulnerable adults and children to be fully protected, and we will support front line social workers in this role. We will improve retention of experienced social workers, attract new talent to the social work profession and promote a culture of supportive supervision and professional development. We will also restructure our social services so that these are more integrated and resilient, consequently we will be in a stronger position to serve the interests of both vulnerable adults and children in Kent, but also provide the wider support to families, which is critical to supporting the wider needs of Kent children.

We will continue to develop early intervention to help and support vulnerable families and save money over the long term, through targeted outreach from our Children's Centres and by better coordinating the support that public agencies including the Police, social workers, housing and health services, provide – ensuring that public services speak with "one voice" and remove the need for families to undergo different assessments from different agencies. There will also be more integration between the Kent Youth Service and Youth Offending Services so that we can better target those young people most at risk of falling into offending. With our partners we will take a robust approach to tackling high-cost disruptive families who cause nuisance and anti-social behaviour, blighting some local neighbourhoods. Through in-depth intervention – including sanctions where necessary – we will support them to change their behaviour.