

## **A Message from, Katherine Kerswell - Group Managing Director Kent County Council**

Kent County Council is consulting on a new operating model “**Change to keep succeeding**” for the organisation. This was discussed at the Cabinet meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> October and then by two further scrutiny boards during that week. On the 15<sup>th</sup> October the draft proposals were then cleared for formal consultation that will continue until the 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

We are now in that formal consultation period and I am writing to you to invite your views on the framework.

We have also launched this week the consultation on our draft medium term plan for the next four years “**Bold Steps for Kent**”. These two consultation periods and their associated documents are very much inter-related and it is important that they are read and responded to in the round.

The draft operating framework that is being consulted upon is also trying to respond to the very significant changes that are taking place both in the national policy framework of the new coalition government and also the very recent funding announcements made in the comprehensive spending review. We have been planning as a council to find £340m of reductions over the next four years.

As such the draft proposals do have some different ideas about how the council could operate in the future. Not only are you very important partners to Kent County Council but you are also key purchasers and providers of a range of services that aid you in delivering a high quality service to the children and young people of Kent.

We have for some time been working to the Every Child Matters policy framework of the last government. Whilst this new government has not removed that framework they have made some quite fundamental changes to the way in which schools are funded, children’s services are to be delivered and requirements for plans and partnership arrangements. We need to be mindful of these and any further changes that may emerge.

Kent County Council has just launched this autumn the 12 district teams with school improvement, children’s social care and other support services and the district based preventative service manager, alongside the 12 Local Children’s Trust Boards. I am personally very committed to this model as I do believe it draws together the services where they absolutely need to connect together – with children, families and schools in localities.

You will see in the operating framework that we are considering changes to the senior management structure and the way in which the current statutory role of the Director of Children’s Services post is organised. We hope to explore during this consultation period what freedoms and alternative reporting lines are possible within the legislation to enable us to meet two very strong policy drivers from Members.

Members are very clear of the need to give strong and unequivocal support (and challenge where needed) to Kent schools and ensure we are playing our fullest part in helping all our children and young people achieve their potential.

Equally they are very clear that the fullest attention and support must be given to our children's social care services to ensure that all children and young people who come in to touch with that service are properly supported, safeguarded and given the best possible care for their lives ahead.

Some of the reflections from Members on our current structure is that the size and scale of the Kent children and young people's economy, the number of schools and the pressures on our social care services make combining these two critical areas together an incredibly complex and demanding job.

However Members did want to take this opportunity to explore whether changing the arrangements could bring more capacity and support into these areas and enhance the achievements in this area to date.

We are also mindful of the ideas in the Health white paper and the opportunities to blend more health and social care services together. We are also discussing with schools ideas around different vehicles to support them in the future and to deliver services together. This structure is also giving capacity to achieve that.

I do appreciate that the Children, Families and Education Directorate has just gone through a lengthy and detailed restructure process. I would hope to reassure you through the commitment expressed in this letter that the model of the 12 locality boards and the integrated services to you in those areas will remain. However we must respond as a council to the very significant and changing external forces we are facing both financially and policy driven and the desires of our own Members to build upon what has worked here at Kent and to improve it further.

I would be very interested to hear your views on these matters and any others within the draft operating proposals. Please send your responses to the following e-mail address:

[firstboldstep@kent.gov.uk](mailto:firstboldstep@kent.gov.uk)

Thank you for your time in reading this letter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Katherine Kerswell**

**Group Managing Director  
Kent County Council**