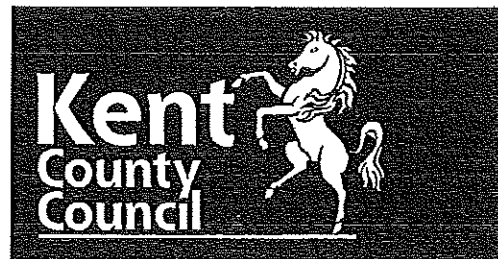


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Our ref: KK/JB/CC/ltr460
Date: 22 December 2010

Dear Abdool

Re: Kent Highway Services attendance at Swale Local Engagement Forums /

Thank you for your recent letter and specifically your desire for increased attendance of Kent Highway Services officers (KHS) at Swale meetings. Since joining this authority the issue of what meetings KHS attend has been raised with me on several occasions. I have discussed this matter with the John Burr, the new Director of KHS and he shares my view that this area needs a total revisit.

It is my understanding that KHS used to attend a large number of meetings and this began to cause issues with staff availability, communication and what levels of empowerment each member of staff and the meeting had. When KHS was last restructured it was agreed with the cabinet member that KHS would only attend the local JTB meetings, and that this was the correct protocol for local engagement and communication. This policy has been followed, and on the whole has worked reasonably well, I am aware however that since arriving John Burr has, on a small number of occasions, instructed his staff to attend additional meetings where a specific highway issue was to be raised and that senior KHS staff were available to attend.

John is currently restructuring KHS and making 'customer centric' and 'local engagement' two of his key drivers for the future. I am unable to give firm details at this time as to what the changes will be, as the formal consultation process is ongoing, but I do know that increased attendance at 'relevant' meetings will be one of the outcomes. I am therefore reluctant at this stage to commit officer time to additional meetings, whilst the review is ongoing and adverse weather, budget restructuring and new contract procurement take up any spare resource. If however you have a specific highways matter that you wish to raise please feel free to contact John Burr who will be only too happy to see if he can resources available.

Kent County Council is fully committed to the 'Big Society' agenda and wishes to work seamlessly with other public bodies for the benefit of the end user. I therefore look forward to building on, and strengthening our relationship in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Group Managing Director
Katherine Kerswell
Group Managing Director



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