

KENT ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY - A STRATEGY FOR ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY AND HEALTH

Cabinet - 21 April 2016

Report of Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services

Status: For decision

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: The Kent Environment strategy - a strategy for environment, health and economy (KES) was subject to public consultation from 27 July to 25 September 2015. Following on from the consultation, the strategy was updated to reflect feedback and the final draft of the strategy was endorsed, for adoption, at the Kent Leaders Meeting on 24 November 2015. It has since been adopted by Kent County Council, on 25 January 2016. This report now seeks adoption at District Council level.

This report supports the Key Aim of a clean and healthy environment, and a sustainable economy.

Portfolio Holder Cabinet

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Recommendation to Cabinet:

Cabinet is requested to adopt the refreshed Kent Environment Strategy - a strategy for environment, health and economy

Reason for recommendation: As a Partnership strategy, to adopt, to align with and support District Council strategies and priorities, including the delivery of programmes and activities by a variety of organisations requiring associated frameworks, MoU's, projects and contracts to be developed and implemented as appropriate.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The previous Kent Environment Strategy ran from 2011 to 2015 and delivered multiple partnership projects and outcomes, which are detailed through the Kent Environment Strategy monitoring and Climate Local Kent reports on the KCC website . Highlights include:

- £5.5m in savings to Kent residents through retrofitting of energy efficiency measures for the most vulnerable
 - The development of our Low Carbon Kent network, providing support to over 1,700 businesses in resource efficiency and business continuity
 - Grants provided to low carbon businesses to support growth and expansion, unlocking private sector investment
 - Public sector partners have undertaken a range of energy efficiency and generation schemes, with KCC alone investing £3.9m to realise £12.9m in lifetime savings through energy efficiency measures
 - Working in partnership, evidence and data have been strengthened around water management, energy efficiency and generation, the value of the natural environment and the financial impacts of severe weather, supporting commissioning, business planning and decision making.
- 2 In light of the strategy coming to an end and with significant changes in Central Government, both at Ministerial and policy level, a refresh has been undertaken with partners, resulting in the development of the ***Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy (Appendix 1)***. This iteration of the strategy has sought to strengthen links across sectors and partner strategies with a particular focus on the integration of environmental, health and economic outcomes. The strategy therefore looks to maximise opportunities in a time of decreasing resources, minimising duplication and identifying where partners can benefit from improved joined up approaches to delivery of positive outcomes for Kent and Medway.
- 3 Through the 10 strategic priorities identified by stakeholders and partners, the strategy seeks to support:
- A competitive and resilient economy, with business innovation in the rural economy and low carbon and environmental services sector driving economic growth.
 - Communities and businesses in saving money through resource efficiency, whilst preparing for severe weather and its impacts through an increased awareness of environmental risks and opportunities.
 - Residents to have a high quality of life, saving money in warmer, healthier homes and benefitting from the many services provided through natural and historic assets, both within communities and across the county.
 - Public sector partners in saving money through evidence-based commissioning, strong partnership working, resource efficiency and avoiding future costs through increased resilience to environmental change.
- 4 The wider partnership governance structure for the KES represents the wide variety of groups, networks and organisations that have a role to play in oversight, challenge, steer and delivery of the KES. The KES Steering Group, comprising representatives of the main delivery and oversight bodies,

will have responsibility for strategic direction and delivery. It is proposed that the main reporting line is to Kent Leaders and Kent Chief Executives to ensure that delivery of the strategy maintains the strong alignment to local authority priorities and outcomes, reflecting local circumstances. This was endorsed at Kent Leaders on 24th November 2015.

- 5 As a partnership strategy, programmes and activities will be delivered through a variety of organisations requiring associated frameworks, MoUs and contracts to be developed and implemented as appropriate.

Consultation on the Kent Environment Strategy

- 6 The draft strategy was open for public consultation between 27th July and 25th September. The consultation was promoted through a press release, social media accounts (KCC's corporate and Explore Kent's Twitter accounts) and targeted emails to key networks and stakeholders. Parallel to the consultation, the strategy has been presented to senior management teams across all Districts and Boroughs and many key stakeholder groups. All documents were made available through www.kent.gov.uk/kesconsultation
- 7 Just over 100 responses were received - 51 from individuals and the remainder from organisations representing public, private and voluntary sectors including the Environment Agency, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, NHS, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent Nature Partnership and Kent Association of Local Councils (as well as seven Districts and Boroughs).
- 8 From those who completed the online questionnaire, the majority of respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the priorities identified for each theme (ranging from 78% to 81% of respondents).
- 9 The responses from the consultation have provided a wealth of further information that we had not previously had access to for integration into the strategy, evidence base and implementation plan. Feedback has been incorporated into this final draft of the strategy and a full report on the consultation was made available to all respondents and on the KCC website from January 2016. Some areas that were raised across respondents and requiring particular attention include
 - 9.1 ***Balance of priorities in relation to development:*** This is the most strongly and frequently made concern that was raised across respondent types, primarily in relation to the pressures of increased housing growth on infrastructure, and in particular, on transport networks, water and energy resources, natural environment and landscape. There was significant concern around the risk of "growth at any cost", which was perceived in light of current targets for growth and development, but at the same time, concerns were raised that the strategy "can't be a barrier to meeting housing targets". In the final draft of the strategy, challenges have been highlighted and greater emphasis has been given to how improved joint working and locally appropriate evidence and guidance can support healthy, resilient communities as places of choice for businesses and residents. The

strategy seeks to provide mechanisms to support planning decisions, recognising the need for sustainable growth in Kent and Medway.

- 9.2 ***Influencing national Government and bodies:*** There is widespread concern that national policy is not providing sufficient incentives or resources for delivery of the priorities identified by the KES. Many respondents expressed concern that, in some cases, Government policy is moving away from effectively supporting energy efficiency and generation, low carbon development and long term resilience to severe weather and climate change, despite their benefits for the economy, health and resilience of communities and businesses. A priority for Theme 1 is to influence national and local policy and strategy and through the implementation plan we will seek to establish a mechanism for this.
- 9.3 ***Agriculture, forestry, viticulture and horticulture:*** Multiple respondents felt that the growing importance of these sectors and their role in our economy and the health and resilience of the county is not fully realised. We have received significant amounts of data and information to support the update of the strategy but in addition, through development of the implementation plan, Economic Development will play a major role in ensuring that opportunities and risks to the sector are addressed in shaping future work programmes. Development of activities for the implementation plan will also need to integrate, and work, with those of the Kent Rural Board who are providing input into the development of the implementation plan.
- 9.4 ***Sustainable Transport options:*** A conflict was seen by respondents between priorities to reduce car travel and what is perceived as a lack of investment in affordable public transport options, particularly in rural areas. It was also felt that the targets and indicators in this area are weak. We are working across the relevant teams in development of the KES implementation plan to ensure that activities are SMART; that the KES influences and link to other strategies such as the Local Transport Plan 4 and the emerging Active Travel Strategy; and that the targets and indicators for this area are strengthened through the activities included in the implementation plan.
- 9.5 ***Noise pollution:*** The issues and impacts surrounding noise pollution are an omission in the current draft of the strategy and this was raised by a number of respondents, with a particular focus from those in the area impacted by air traffic for Gatwick Airport. Further research on the impacts of noise pollution has been integrated into Theme 1 of the strategy with associated activities integrated into Themes 2 and 3. Links to Kent County Council (KCC) and District and Borough policy in this area will be more clearly defined in the strategy and implementation plan.
- 9.6 ***Links between strategies, plans and partner roles:*** There was significant feedback requesting clarification on how links will be made between strategies, local plans and where the Kent Environment Strategy fits into these. In addition, respondents were keen to see how they could play a role

in delivery of the priorities. To address this point, the strategy has been updated to further refine strategic links and governance building on discussions across partner organisations. Development of the implementation plan will be carried out in partnership with stakeholders to ensure clear roles, resourcing and timelines are identified.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no direct budget implications as resources will be project and activity specific. There will be some core staff time spent delivering against the priorities identified but no projects will be commissioned without a clear evidence base identifying need and strategic fit as per KCC's commissioning approach. Where a priority is clearly identified but resources for delivery do not already exist, external funding will be sought in partnership to ensure best use of resources and prevent duplication of effort. A key priority within Theme 1 of the strategy has been developed to support this approach.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

None

Equality Assessment

A full EqIA was carried out prior to consultation and is available on the consultation pages (www.kent.gov.uk/kesconsultation). EqIAs will also be needed as individual projects and activities are developed and this will be monitored through both the annual KES and the KCC Equalities monitoring processes.

Appendices

Appendix A - Kent Environment Strategy - A Strategy for Environment, Health and Economy - March 2016

Background Papers:

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Richard Wilson

Chief Officer Environmental and Operational Services