

<b>Cabinet Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	2 March 2016
<b>Report Title</b>	Adoption of the Kent Environment Strategy
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr David Simmons, Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Abdool Kara
<b>Head of Service</b>	David Clifford
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Janet Hill
<b>Recommendations</b>	Cabinet is recommended to: 1. <b>Adopt</b> the refreshed Kent Environment Strategy.

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Over the last ten years Swale Borough Council has built a strong working relationship with Kent County Council and other Kent authorities for tackling climate change and environmental issues. Within this working partnership Swale is a key player at both member and officer level, particularly in the Kent Environment Champions' Group and the Kent Climate Change Partnership. The Kent Environment Strategy of 2011 was a product of this partnership and has now been revised after extensive consultation. The Strategy was adopted by KCC's Cabinet this January. This report seeks adoption of the Kent Environment Strategy by Swale Borough Council.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 The previous Kent Environment Strategy ran from 2011 to 2015. It delivered multiple partnership projects and outcomes, which are detailed through the Kent Environment Strategy monitoring and Climate Local Kent reports on KCC's website. Highlights include:
- £5.5m in savings to Kent residents through the retrofitting of energy efficiency measures for the most vulnerable;
  - the development of the 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; and
  - in Swale, we developed our own Climate Local Swale, which took the Climate Local Kent commitments and targets and made them more relevant locally. To date most of our targets are on track, with some, such as the

reduction in our own CO<sub>2</sub>, exceeding target. The latest Climate Local Report is at Appendix I.

### 3 Proposal

- 3.1 In light of the Strategy coming to an end, and with significant changes in central government, both at ministerial and policy level, KCC has led a refresh of the document, resulting in the revised Strategy set out at Appendix II.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Through the ten 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; and
  - 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.
- 3.4 A summary of the structure of the Strategy and priorities is given in Appendix III.
- 3.5 As a strategy for the environment, economy and health, the priorities within the KES cut across service areas within Swale, KCC, and partner organisations, with all having a role in developing and delivering activities both internally and across the Borough and County.
- 3.6 The wider partnership governance structure for the KES is set out at in Appendix IV. This structure 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. The main reporting line will be to Kent Leaders and Kent Chief Executives to ensure that delivery of the Strategy maintains the strong alignment

with local authority priorities and outcomes, reflecting local circumstances. This was agreed by Kent Leaders in November.

- 3.7 As a partnership strategy, programmes and activities will be delivered through a variety of organisations, requiring associated frameworks, Memoranda of Understanding, and contracts to be developed and implemented as appropriate.
- 3.8 Theme 1 of the Strategy will develop clear evidence to support decision-makers and commissioning across partners, and this will be underpinned through the development of a central data and intelligence hub funded through Intelligent Energy Europe. IEE is a European Commission programme that provides funding for projects supporting the EU 2020 targets of a 20 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions, 20 percent improvement in energy efficiency, and 20 percent of renewables in EU energy consumption.

## **4 Alternative Options**

- 4.1 The Strategy is a collaborative document which is expected to be adopted by local authorities and other agencies throughout Kent. For Swale, to not adopt the Strategy would have the potential to:
  - exclude us from a worthwhile partnership and put Swale at a disadvantage for funding opportunities and partnership working;
  - harm our reputation and credibility within Kent as a leading climate change player at both member and officer level; and
  - jeopardise our chairing of the Kent Environment Champions Group.

## **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 The draft Strategy was open for public consultation for eight weeks during the summer of 2015. The consultation was promoted through a press release, social media accounts, and targeted emails to key networks and stakeholders. Parallel to the consultation, the draft Strategy was presented to senior management teams across all Districts and Boroughs, and many key stakeholder groups, including Swale's Rural Forum and Green Grid Partnership. All documents were also made available through the KCC website.
- 5.2 Just over 100 responses were received, of which 51 were from individuals and the remainder from organisations representing public, private and voluntary sectors. These included the Environment Agency, National Farmers Union, Country Land and Business Association, NHS, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent Nature Partnership, and Kent Association of Local Councils. Swale submitted a full and generally positive consultation response.
- 5.3 From those who completed the online questionnaire, a significant majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the priorities identified for each theme (ranging from 78% to 81% of respondents).

5.4 The responses from the consultation have provided a wealth of further information that had not previously been available 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 will be made available to all respondents and on the KCC website shortly.

## 6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Adoption of the Kent Environment Strategy has a bearing on all three of Swale’s corporate priority themes (Borough, Community and Council to be proud of). It relates particularly to the following medium-term strategic objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) A Borough to be proud of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Objective 1.2: Enhance the Borough’s economic and tourism offer</li> <li>▪ Objective 1.3: Keep Swale clean and tidy</li> <li>▪ Objective 1.4: Protect and improve the natural and built environments</li> </ul> </li> <li>(ii) A Community to be proud of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Objective 2.1: Foster economic growth and prosperity for all</li> <li>▪ Objective 2.2: Encourage active communities and support the voluntary sector</li> <li>▪ Objective 2.4: Use our influence to ensure local skills are matched to local jobs</li> <li>▪ Objective 2.5: Work collaboratively to improve health and mental health</li> </ul> </li> <li>(iii) A Council to be proud of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Objective 3.3: Encourage innovation at every level</li> <li>▪ Objective 3.5: Enhance our capacity for achieving outcomes collaboratively</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

	A key priority within Theme 1 of the strategy has been developed to support this approach: Priority 3.2: Establish a coordinated approach to identifying and maximising funding opportunities, establishing mechanisms for co-delivery as appropriate.
Legal and Statutory	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Sustainability	Sustainability is at the heart of this Strategy, with a particular focus on the integration of environmental, health and economic outcomes. Adopting the Strategy will support sustainability within the Council, with partners, and with the public.
Health and Wellbeing	The Kent Environment Strategy establishes the link between environmental factors and health impacts on local residents to ensure communities benefit from various initiatives, including the provision of local transport plans enabling easy access to health services, employment opportunities, recreational facilities and open spaces, as well as addressing the needs of the most vulnerable during severe weather changes, all of which have a positive impact on inter-related issues to improve mental health and physical wellbeing.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The consequences of a changing climate present a range of risks to the Council, the Borough, and its residents. The Strategy includes actions to ensure that Kent plays its part in mitigating the causes of climate change, but also, importantly, actions to prepare communities for adverse weather events, and make them more resilient as the climate continues to become hotter, wetter, more extreme, and less predictable.
Equality and Diversity	A full Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out prior to consultation and is available on the KCC website ( <a href="http://www.kent.gov.uk/kesconsultation">www.kent.gov.uk/kesconsultation</a> ).  Equalities Impact Assessments will also be needed as individual projects and activities are developed, and this will be monitored through both the annual KES and the KCC equality monitoring processes, and through Swale's own processes where relevant.

## 7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Climate Local Swale – December 2015
- Appendix II: Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy

- Appendix III: Summary of the structure of the strategy and priorities
- Appendix IV: Partnership governance of the Kent Environment Strategy

## **8 Background Papers**

- KCC Cabinet Report January 2016 available at <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s61615/160125%20Cabinet%20KES%20FINAL.pdf>
- SBC Cabinet Report March 2011 available at <http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/Data/Cabinet/20110316/Agenda/Report%20for%20Item%207%20-%207E2247B014C748DEA85C3A3C263AFEE1.pdf>