

From: Robert Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 14 January 2025

Subject: KCC Environment Policy revision

Decision Number: 24/00114

Classification: Unrestricted

Past pathway of paper: N/A

Future pathway of paper: For Decision by Cabinet Member

Electoral Division: N/A

Summary: This report presents the revision of the Council's Environment Policy to be formally approved and adopted by the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee.

Recommendation(s):

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment to:

- (i) APPROVE the revised Policy for adoption and implementation through the ISO14001 Environmental Management Standard framework; and
- (ii) To DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision as shown at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Council's Environment Policy is to make a clear public commitment to implement a programme of environmental improvement. This includes reducing the environmental impacts of the Council's operations and services, taking account of future climate risk when planning services and taking decisions and working with partners, businesses and communities to address KCC's and Kent's environmental issues and priorities.
- 1.2 The current Policy was issued in September 2020. Since that time several environmental strategies and plans have been endorsed, these include the Environment Plan, the Adaptation Plan, Net Zero Plan, Framing Kent's Future, Kent's Plan Bee and Kent Plan Tree.

2. Revised Policy and governance

- 2.1 The Policy is a key requirement to meet the criteria of the ISO14001 International Standard for Environmental Management. All services within the Council have been assessed against and certified to this Standard since April 2009, demonstrating that our environmental management, compliance and improvement plans stand up to external scrutiny and reflect good management practice.
- 2.2 Key revisions to the Policy include alignment to the Environment Plan, key strategies and the ISO14001 standard.
- 2.3 The implementation of the Policy commitments is overseen by the KCC Environment Board, chaired by the Director for Environment & Circular Economy. All Directorates are represented at Director level on this board and it reports to the Corporate Management Team. The revision of the Policy was informed by key officers and this Board.
- 2.4 The Environment and Circular Economy division will co-ordinate the implementation of the Policy through the Council's environmental programme, engaging with all services to deliver actions to achieve environmental targets. The team provides six-monthly progress reports to each Directorate Management Team as well as the KCC Environment Board.

3. Options (other options considered but discarded)

Do nothing - Retain existing policy which was last revised and published in September 2020.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The review and revision of the Environment policy has been carried out by base-funded staff and at no additional cost to the council. The policy refresh will not place any additional financial obligations on the council. Staff time will be the main resource required to deliver the goals that are set out in this policy and will be undertaken by base funded staff from all services involved. The delivery actions are predominantly focused on increasing knowledge, communication and engagement and enhancing procedures and policies. This will be carried out by base staff taking into account relevant spending controls including Securing Kent's Future.
- 4.2 The commitment of staff resources to deliver the Policy will principally be through the Council's established environmental programme. The core staff resources sit within Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate.
- 4.3 Requests for further funding will be considered after the development of robust business cases. Where match funding or in-kind funding may be required, it will be assessed on a project-by-project basis.

- 4.4 The proposed decision supports **Securing Kent's Future** as financing options underpinned by KCC's emerging green finance strategy will provide an alternative route to funding for environmental outcomes. Having the ISO 14001 certification opens up more funding opportunities, as some funders may require this standard. This will be crucial in funding environmental interventions moving forward, as current budgets are highly unlikely to be able to fund the measures that are needed to meet the scale of the environmental challenge faced by KCC, unless there are significant changes to how local government is funded.
- 4.5 The updated policy will be there to significantly reduce the risk of non-compliance with environmental legislation. Not updating the policy will mean there is outdated information and a greater risk of KCC being fined due to non-compliance, therefore the updating of the policy further supports **Securing Kent's Future**.

5. Policy Framework

- 5.1 The revised Policy aligns with the Environment Plan and supporting strategies and plans, such as Framing Kent's Future, Adaptation Plan, Net Zero Plan, Kent Environment Strategy, Kent & Medway Energy & Low Emissions Strategy, Kent Biodiversity Strategy, Plan Bee Pollinator Action Plan, Kent Plan Tree and the Active Travel Strategy.
- 5.2 The environmental programme provides assurance that environmental risks and compliance with relevant legislation is adequately managed and addressed across all Council services.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. There are no significant negative impacts but there is a possibility that there are some specific characteristic groups that may struggle to view the policy online so we will work with the digital services team to ensure this is accessible to all. As this Policy is aimed at improving environmental performance and is aligned with the Environment Plan there are likely to be more positive equality impacts than negative, particularly for Age, Maternity, Carers and Disability.

7. General Data Protection Regulation Considerations

- 7.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not needed as this Policy does not require the processing of personal data.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The intention of the Policy is to continue to make a clear and updated public commitment for Kent County Council to implement a programme of environmental improvement. This includes reducing the environmental impacts of the Council's operations and services, taking account of future climate risk when planning services and taking decisions and working with partners,

businesses and communities to address KCC's and Kent's environmental issues and priorities.

8.2 Under the framework of the Environment Plan, the Environment and Circular Economy division will co-ordinate the implementation of this Policy through an environmental improvement programme compliant with the Environmental Management Standard ISO14001. It is important the Policy is kept up to date and aligned with new strategies and plans reflecting the Council's commitment to taking action in line with current environmental priorities for KCC and Kent.

9. Next Steps and Timescales

9.1 Subject to comments from Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, the Policy will proceed to the decision to adopt the Policy which will replace the current policy published on the Council's website.

10. Recommendation(s)

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11. Appendices and Background Documents

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B – Revised Environment Policy
- Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment
- Current Environment Policy published here: [KCC Environment Policy \(kent.gov.uk\)](https://www.kent.gov.uk/council-and-cabinet/cabinet-members/cabinet-member-for-environment)

12. Contact details

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