

2 Climate Change Select Committee - Executive Summary

2.1 Why the Select Committee Has Taken Place and its Purpose

2.1.1 Climate change¹ is an issue of growing public concern and awareness. It is also an increasing priority for government at international², national³ and local⁴ level. The Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee established a Select Committee on Climate Change in August 2005. The strength and volume of the evidence presented leads the Select Committee to readily accept the scientific consensus that climate change over and above that which can be explained by natural variation is happening, and that human activity is responsible. As such, acceptance of these propositions is the most - indeed, the only - sensible basis for future policy development on climate change.

2.1.2 Three of the biggest obstacles for securing a commitment to action on climate change are that:

- Some of its most dramatic predicted effects seem a long way off, and it is difficult to predict when they might occur.
- There is some awareness of the impact of global warming on distant parts of the planet – the polar ice caps, expanding deserts, low lying Pacific island states, for example – but very little understanding and awareness of the profound changes facing Kent.
- It is difficult to attribute any particular extreme weather event – whether that be the current drought or the flooding in New Orleans in 2005 for example – to climate change.

2.1.3 Having considered these questions in some detail, however, the Select Committee believes that:

¹ For the definition of climate change used in this report, please see section 4.1.2 **Error! Reference source not found.** For a further detailed definition, please see the glossary.

² For example, the formation of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change in 1988, assembled by the world's governments to provide scientific advice on climate change. See www.ipcc.ch/about/about.htm.

³ For example, the formation of the UK Climates Impacts Programme in 1997, see evidence in this report and www.ukcip.org.uk.

⁴ For example, the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change to which Kent County Council is a signatory. This is a declaration for Local Authorities to commit to tackling the impact of climate change. See www.lga.gov.uk/Briefing.asp?lsection=59&id=SXB9C9-A77F8CF8&ccat=216.

- The evidence that climate change, over and above that which can be explained by natural variability, is already happening is overwhelming. As such, it needs to be addressed as a problem for today, not just for tomorrow, particularly as the warming we will experience until the 2040s has already been determined by past emissions.
- The impacts of climate change for the UK will be acute. Kent will experience some of those impacts, notably rising temperatures and reduced summer rainfall, more sharply than any other part of the country.
- Uncertainty is not an excuse for inaction. Governments, central or local, are likely to face grave political consequences if they do not act and the impacts become more apparent, which they may do rapidly and unexpectedly.

2.2 Recommendations

2.2.1 The Select Committee's recommendations are summarised below and are not ranked in order of importance. The detail supporting recommendations are in the report as indicated and readers are referred to these sections for further details.

No.	Summary Description of Recommendation	Section for Detail	Detailed Recommendation Section Reference
1	An explicit corporate acceptance of climate change and how human activity contributes to it.	Is Climate Change Happening?	4.2.3
2	Detailed assessment of climate change impacts on KCC services and development of adaptive responses.	Adaptation	6.3.8
3	Ensure climate change impacts on flood risk, water resources and emergency planning are taken into account.	Adaptation	6.11.5
4	Provide support for better sustainable energy advice to Kent's residents.	Mitigation	7.5.7
5	Complete a feasibility study for use of biomass in KCC buildings and replace conventional fuels with bio-fuels in KCC vehicles where possible.	Mitigation	7.7.7
6	Increase support for energy efficiency and renewable energy, particularly micro-generation, in the KCC estate and across Kent as a whole.	Mitigation	7.9.13

No.	Summary Description of Recommendation	Section for Detail	Full Recommendation Section Reference
7	Review transport policy to achieve an overall reduction in emissions from transport in the KCC estate and across Kent as a whole.	Mitigation	7.12.8
8	Make more efficient use of land in the development process and meet higher standards of sustainable construction.	Mitigation (and Adaptation)	7.17.3
9	Introduce a Climate Change Action Plan, supported by clear targets.	Community Leadership	8.4.10
10	High profile communications programme.	Community Leadership	8.5.5
11	Clarify political and management leadership and accountability on climate change within KCC.	Community Leadership	8.6.4
12	Improve education on climate change impacts.	Community Leadership	8.7.6