

From: Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport
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To: Cabinet, 25 January 2015

Subject: Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, economy and health

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Electoral Division: Kent Wide

Summary:

The *Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy* was subject to public consultation from 27 July to 25 September 2015, as agreed at the E&T Cabinet Committee meeting on 21 July 2015. Following on from the consultation, the strategy was updated to reflect feedback and the final draft of the strategy was endorsed at Kent Leaders on 24 November 2015 and the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 4 December 2015. This paper now seeks adoption of the Kent Environment Strategy by Kent County Council.

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to adopt the refreshed *Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy* by Kent County Council. As a partnership strategy, this will include the delivery of programmes and activities by a variety of organisations requiring associated frameworks, MoUs, projects and contracts to be developed and implemented as appropriate.

1 Introduction

1.1 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 our KCC website¹. 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.

¹ [Kent Environment Strategy Progress Report 2014](#)

1.2 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 our partners, resulting in the development of the **Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy (Annex 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.

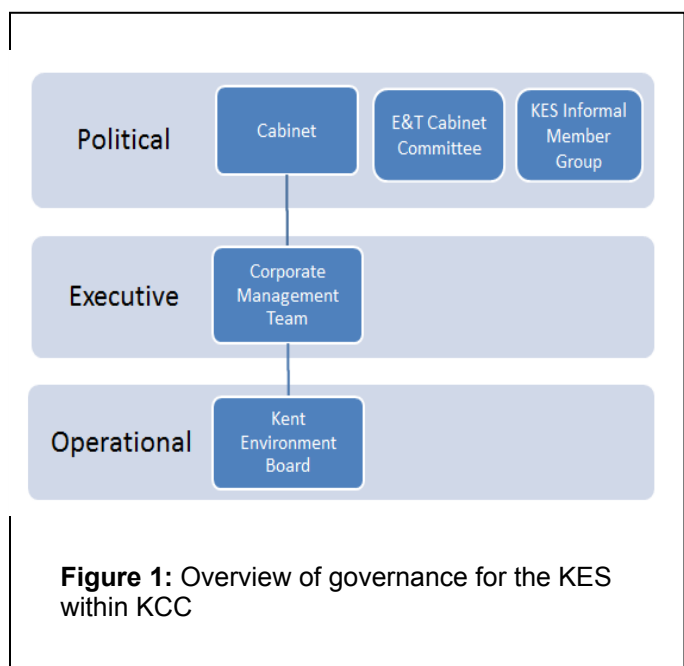
1.3 Through the 10 strategic priorities identified by stakeholders and partners, the strategy seeks to support:

- 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.

1.4 A summary of the structure of the strategy and priorities is given in **Annex 2**. Delivery of the KES priorities directly aligns to a number of KCC’s strategic outcomes and a summary is given in **Annex 3**.

1.5 As a strategy for environment, economy and health, the priorities within the KES cut across Directorates within KCC and partner organisations, with all having a role in developing and delivering activities both internally and across the county.

1.6 The proposed reporting and governance for KCC’s responsibilities in relation to the strategy are **Figure 1**. It is proposed that Cabinet hold responsibility for the oversight of delivery of the strategy, supported by CMT and the Kent Environment Board. The Kent Environment Board is made up of KCC Directors with responsibility for environmental outcomes, providing operational steer and challenge for the strategy internally within KCC. Regular reports on progress will be provided to the E&T Cabinet Committee and, in addition, support and challenge will



be provided through the cross-party KES Informal Member Group established by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport.

- 1.7 The wider partnership governance structure for the KES is given in **Annex 4**. 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. 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.
- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 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 and provides funding for projects supporting the EU 2020 targets: 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions; 20% improvement in energy efficiency and 20% of renewables in EU energy consumption).

2. Consultation on the Kent Environment Strategy

- 2.1 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
- 2.2 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).
- 2.3 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).
- 2.4 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 will be made available to all respondents and on the website from January 2016. Some areas that were raised across respondents and requiring particular attention include:

2.4.1 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. (There are text updates across the strategy and particular reference is made in priorities 8.2 and 8.3).

2.4.2 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, including a cross-party KES Informal Member Group proposed by Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport. (Page 16).

2.4.3 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. (Pages 22, 30 and Priority 10.2 page 32)

2.4.4 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.

2.4.5 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. (Pages 6, 16, 17, 25, 34)

2.4.6 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 and KCC Policy Team. Development of the implementation plan will be carried out in partnership with stakeholders to ensure clear roles, resourcing and timelines are identified. (Pages 11 and 12).

3. Financial Implications

3.1 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 (3.2: *Establish a coordinated approach to identifying and maximising funding opportunities, establishing mechanisms for co-delivery as appropriate*).

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None

5. Equalities implications

5.1 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.

6. Next steps

February/March: Finalisation of the partnership Implementation Plan underpinning the strategy (led by KCC in collaboration with partners). A workshop will be held on 25th February to confirm draft identified actions and finalise the plan.

March/April: Adoption of the KES by all partners and launch (as endorsed at Kent Leaders on 24th November 2015). All partners are currently confirming internal processes for adoption prior to the launch event in the Spring (led by KCC).

7. Recommendation (see page 1)

- 1 Cabinet is asked to adopt the refreshed Kent Environment Strategy: A strategy for environment, health and economy by Kent County Council. As a partnership strategy, this will include the delivery of programmes and activities by a variety of organisations requiring associated frameworks, MoUs, projects and contracts to be developed and implemented as appropriate.

8. Background Documents

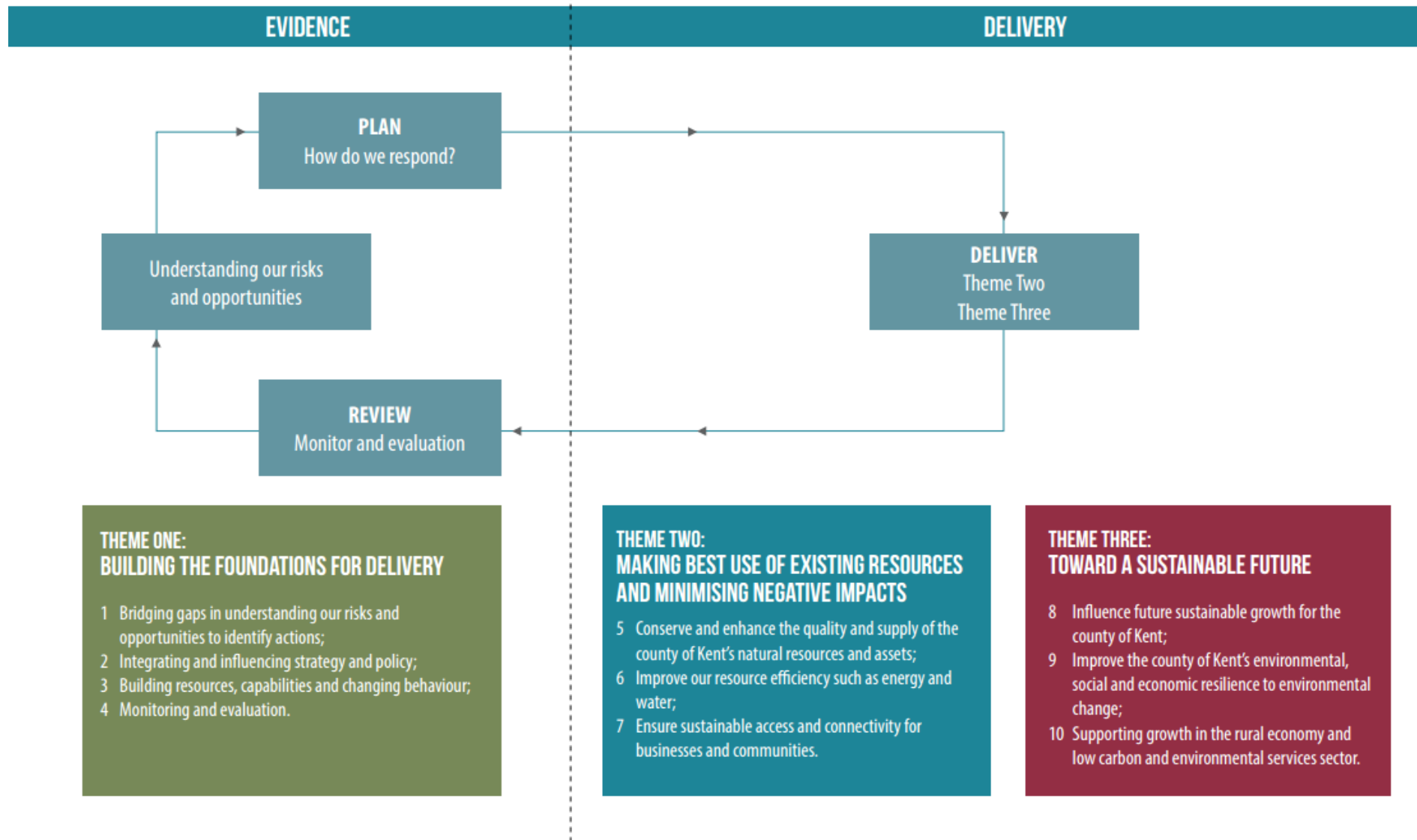
- All consultation documents available at www.kent.gov.uk/kesconsultation
- E&T Cabinet Committee paper on KES consultation 21st July 2015
- Corporate Management Team paper 13th October
- Kent Leaders paper on endorsement and partnership governance of the KES 24th November 2015: <http://www.kentcouncilleaders.org.uk/meetings/> (meeting papers to be uploaded – available on request)
- E&T Cabinet Committee paper on endorsement of the KES 4th December 2015: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=831&MId=5893&Ver=4>

9. Contact details

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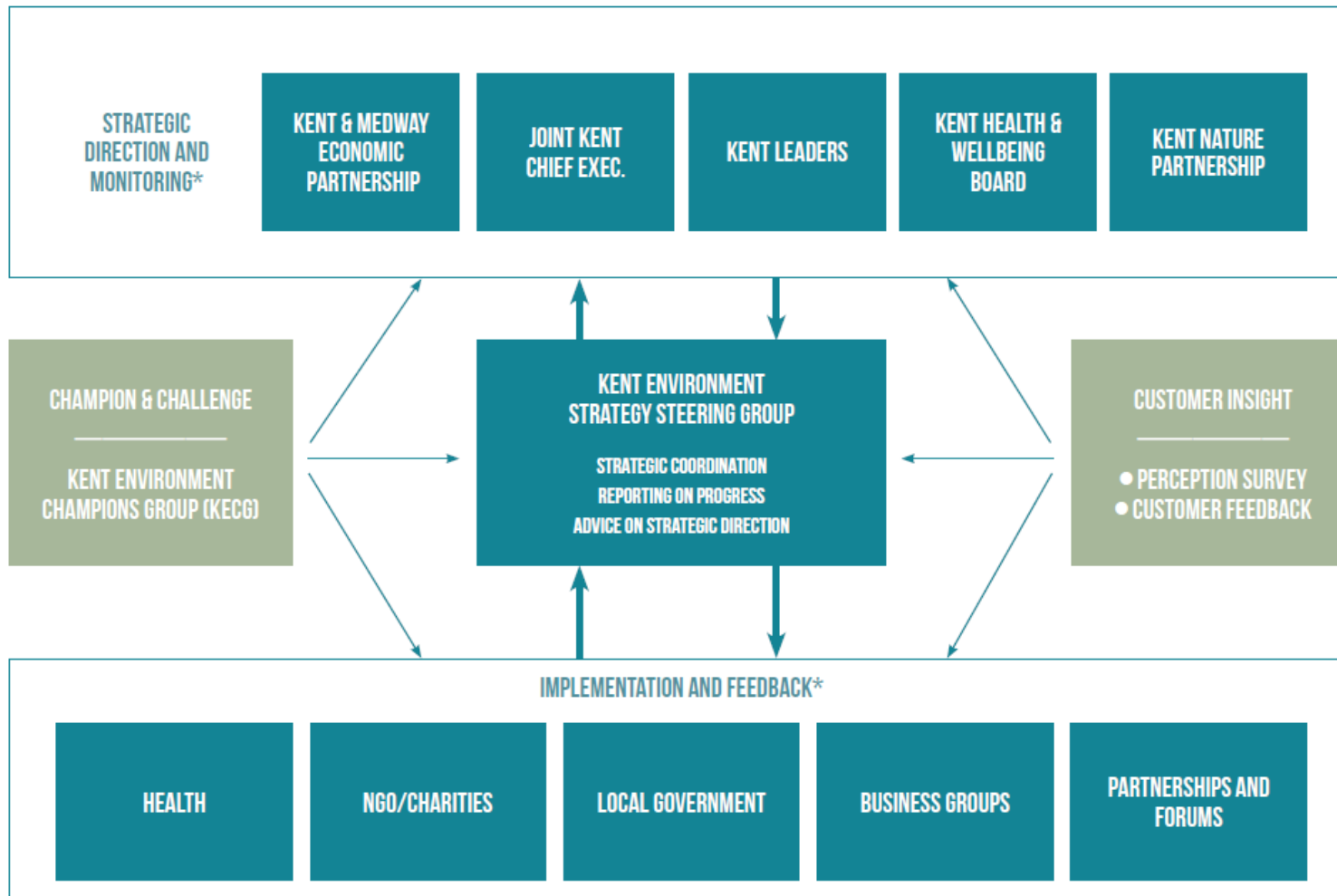
Annex 2: Summary of priorities and structure of the Kent Environment Strategy



Annex 3: Alignment of KES priorities to KCC's strategic outcomes

KCC's strategic outcome	Kent Environment Strategy priority
Children and young people in Kent get the best start in life	Priority 9: Improve the county of Kent's environmental, social and economic resilience to environmental change (sub-priority 9.1: Increase awareness of the impacts of severe weather and environmental change and empower businesses and communities to build resilience)
	Priority 10: Supporting growth in the rural economy and low carbon and environmental services sector (sub-priority 10.3: Support skills development to facilitate growth)
Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life	Priority 1: Bridging gaps in understanding our risks and opportunities to identify actions
	Priority 5: Conserve and enhance the quality and supply of the county of Kent's natural and historical resources and assets
	Priority 6: Improve our resource efficiency, including energy and water
	Priority 7: Ensure sustainable access and connectivity for businesses and communities
	Priority 8: Influence future sustainable growth for the county of Kent
	Priority 9: Improve the county of Kent's environmental, social and economic resilience to environmental change
	Priority 10: Supporting growth in the rural economy and low carbon and environmental services sector
Older and vulnerable residents are safe and supported with choices to live independently	Priority 6: Improve our resource efficiency, including energy and water (sub-priority 6.2: Improve the resource efficiency of our homes through delivery of retrofitting programmes, reducing costs and improving health outcomes for the most vulnerable).

Annex 4: Partnership governance of the Kent Environment Strategy



*Representatives sit on the Kent Environment Strategy Steering Group
The main reporting line will be to Kent Leaders and Joint Chief Execs