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Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Supporting
Independence
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To: Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee, 16
July 2009

Subject: **A summary of plans to review the Kent Partnership's Environment
Strategy**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The Kent Environment Strategy was first produced in 2003 and a review process has begun. This is an opportunity to produce a focussed document which enables the Kent Partnership and its stakeholders to concentrate on a small number of priorities to achieve real change for Kent. This report summarises the review timetable and the key themes which will shape the new Strategy.

Recommendation: That Members:

- a. Comment on and approve the plans to review the Environment Strategy
- b. Debate and inform the future direction of the Strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Kent Environment Strategy (KES) was first produced in 2003 under the sponsorship of the Kent Partnership. The new KES will build on the previous Strategy and continue to be a Kent Partnership owned and led document. However, given the lapse of time and the changing policy environment since 2003, it is appropriate for the new Strategy to be a very different document to its predecessor.
- 1.2. Progress reports on the 2003 strategy were produced in 2005 and 2007. These highlighted that, whilst there had been a lot of activity to deliver environmental enhancements, we have not yet achieved our vision. Crucially the reports identified that Kent is living well outside its environmental limits and needs to take significant action.
- 1.3. The Kent Regeneration Framework identified a suite of 8 documents, including an Environment Strategy, which would support and deliver the Vision for Kent. These documents are all running to a timetable that will see them finalised by December 2009.
- 1.4. The purpose of this report is to seek the Policy Overview Committee's views on the structure proposed for the Kent Environment Strategy and thoughts on what priorities they would like the Kent Partnership to use the Strategy to address.

2. An Outline of Kent Environment Strategy 2009

- 2.1. It is proposed to produce a streamlined KES which identifies a 20 year vision for Kent's environment and for Kent's impact on the global environment. This would be underpinned by a small collection of shorter term, high priority objectives which would be revised regularly (3 to 5 years) to ensure that Kent maintained momentum towards delivering the vision. Simple, focussed delivery plans could then be adjusted year on year.
- 2.2. This approach would be in contrast to the current Environment Strategy which has 11 themes and 41 objectives.
- 2.3. The new KES would be developed to drive delivery of meaningful, achievable and innovative environmental outcomes in Kent, have strong synergies with other strategies in the Kent Partnership suite and focus on benefits to communities, businesses and individuals. We will also ensure that an appropriate framework for monitoring delivery and performance is established.
- 2.4. Early analysis of the environmental issues to be tackled across Kent has led to the development of three strategic themes:
 - a. **Combating the climate change challenge – Working towards a low carbon Kent which is prepared for climate change.** Using less energy more wisely and ensuring that our urban design, rural land use, natural habitats, rivers and coasts are all able to adapt in the face of increased temperatures and more extreme weather events. This theme would dovetail with the Kent Local Area Agreement (LAA) indicators 186, 187, 188 and 189¹ also 175².
 - b. **Valuing our natural and living environments – Valuing the real economic benefits of environmental services while protecting and enhancing the unique natural and built character of Kent.** Being smarter about regeneration and service delivery by recognising that the environment can provide us with highly cost effective solutions to some of the issues we face in Kent. For instance there is irrefutable evidence that green space in an urban environment can improve life expectancy and decrease physical and mental health complaints, thus avoiding the provision of costly medical intervention. Another example is good watershed management which can be much cheaper than cleaning pollutants out of our rivers and coastal waters. We must also continue to recognise that the environment of Kent is unique and precious and fulfil our role as guardians of this resource. This theme relates directly to LAA indicators 197 and 195³ as well as making a contribution to, 3, 6, 8, 55, 110 .

¹ Indicator 186 Per capita CO₂ emissions in the local authority area

187 Tackling fuel poverty - % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating

188 Planning to Adapt to Climate Change

189 Flood and coastal erosion risk management

² Indicator 175 Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling

³ Indicator 197 Improved local biodiversity – proportion of local sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented

195 Improved street and environmental cleanliness

3 Civic participation in the local area

6 Participation in regular volunteering

8 Adult participation in sport and active recreation

110 Young people's participation in positive activities

55 Obesity in primary school age children in reception

- c. *Living within our environmental limits – Reducing the resources we consume as a community in relation to our share of what is available globally, our ecological footprint.*** Leading Kent towards more efficient use of resources by supporting reduced consumption and reducing waste makes good economic as well as environmental sense. Kent is part of a global community that is depleting natural resources at a faster rate than they can be regenerated; $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world's fisheries are facing commercial extinction, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the birds and mammals on earth are in danger of extinction, and we are losing 2% of the world's forests every year. If everyone in the world consumed at the same rate as the residents of Kent we would need 3.3 planets. This links to LAA indicator 191⁴
- 2.5. These themes have a high degree of fit with the Regional Economic Strategy, the Vision for Kent and KCC's Regeneration Framework as well as its own environment policy (Annex 1). They have been tested with the Kent Economic Board's Environment Task Group who were supportive of them.
- 2.6. For each theme we will set out a 20 year vision supported by 3 or 4 medium term priority objectives (a total of 12 for the whole Strategy). The priority objectives will describe the first steps Kent Partnership should take towards delivering the vision. These should be deliverable within 3 to 5 years and would be reviewed as they are delivered in order to set the next steps on the path to the vision. It is proposed that, while we do want a long term vision for the future, setting objectives longer than 5 years ahead is unrealistic as the policy background, economic situation and delivery mechanisms will change over this time.
- 2.7. The delivery of the Strategy would then be supported by action plans, which would focus on key mechanisms and projects and which could be tweaked on a yearly basis. Of course, much of the delivery of the KES vision will lie with other emerging Kent and KCC strategies under the KCC Regeneration Framework, particularly the Environmental Technologies Sector Strategy, the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Housing Strategy.

3. Review process for Kent Environment Strategy 2009

- 3.1. Early consultation with members of the Kent Partnership, including district council representatives and other key stakeholders, in the form of 3 theme based working groups, is currently underway. These small working groups are identifying the elements for a vision and priority objectives which will inform the first draft of the Strategy.
- 3.2. A consultation draft of the Strategy will be ready by end of July, which would include a description of progress in Kent, the challenges we are facing and our thematic visions for the future. It would also include a long draft list of priority objectives.
- 3.3. Consultation will be carried out with district and borough councils and other interested and knowledgeable stakeholders in August and September. The draft Strategy will also be available for comment on Kent County Council's website.

⁴ Indicator 191 Residual household waste per household

- 3.4. The next draft of the Strategy will be written in October and this will refine the visions and reduce the long list of priorities to 3 or 4 per theme. It will also include an action plan of key activities to deliver the priorities.
- 3.5. Future versions of the draft Strategy will be brought back for discussion and approval by the County Council.
- 3.6. The whole process is steered by a Project Board chaired by Linda Davies, KCC Director, Environment and Waste, and with members from the Kent Partnership Environment Task Group.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. This is an opportunity to produce a focussed document which enables Kent Partnership and its stakeholders to concentrate on a small number of priorities to achieve real change for Kent. The three challenging and overarching themes - *Combating the climate change challenge; Valuing our natural and living environments; and Living within our environmental limits* - can act as the basis by which everyone working in Kent can test and verify the contribution their organisation is making to the achievement of a sustainable county.

5. Recommendations

- 6.1 . That Members:
 - a. Comment on and approve the plans to review the Environment Strategy
 - b. Debate and inform the future direction of the Strategy

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Kent County Council Environment Policy

At Kent County Council, elected members and staff alike recognise that protection and enhancement of the environment is the key to sustaining a high quality of life in Kent. We recognise that our own activities have an impact on the environment, that we have a responsibility to ensure that these impacts are positive, and that our use of natural resources is minimised.

Our vision

To stabilise and progressively reduce our environmental footprint; to progressively reduce our carbon dioxide emissions and make sure our estate and services are adapted to the future impacts and opportunities of climate change; and to contribute positively to Kent's character, local environmental quality and natural environment

We will do this by applying an evidence led approach to sustainability, identifying the potential for cost savings wherever possible and committing to environmental policies and standards in the following areas:

Our decisions

We will:

- Expect every manager and decision-maker in KCC to demonstrate how they comply with this Policy
- Integrate environmental considerations into our strategic and day-to-day decision-making processes, and give significant weight to them where they conflict with other objectives
- Assess key decisions for their environmental impact, taking a pragmatic whole-life-cost view, and use such assessments to fully inform decision-making
- 'Climate proof' decisions to ensure they reduce our contribution to climate change and help us prepare for the impacts and opportunities of unavoidable climate change, including where appropriate enabling biodiversity and coastal areas to adapt to climate change in line with the KCC Climate Change Action Plan
- Continue to comply with all relevant environmental legislation and statutory duties
- Seek to embrace new environmental technology and methodologies to ensure we are at the leading edge of developments and solutions, within a well-managed risk-analysis and cost-benefit framework

Our estate

We will:

- Reduce energy use within our estate to meet carbon reduction targets of 10% by 2010 and 20% by 2015
- Increase the proportion of the energy needs of our existing estate met from renewable sources
- Reduce water use by 7.5% by 2010 across our estate
- Reduce waste generation across our estate by 10% by 2010, and increase the proportion of our corporate waste which is reused or recycled to 50% by 2010
- Maximise the efficient use of land in our Estate by reusing previously developed land and buildings wherever practical, before using greenfield land.
- Protect, enhance and restore biodiversity, the natural and historic environment within both our buildings and open space, including measures that support climate change adaptation
- Minimise light, noise, air and other forms of pollution arising from our estate
- Ensure KCC-owned highways comply with the relevant parts of this Policy

Our travel and transport

We will:

- Reduce our members and employees' need to travel, including through our estate strategy, locations selected for council events, use of public transport, teleconferencing and other sustainable solutions
- Achieve reductions in total business mileage travelled by employees, encourage greater car sharing and other sustainable solutions, without adversely affecting end-user service delivery
- Promote the use of fuel efficient vehicles and technologies through our vehicle fleet and lease car scheme

Our procurement

We will:

- Increase the proportion of goods and services sourced locally where there are environmental or employment benefits and in compliance with broader UK and EU purchasing legislation
- Work with our suppliers to ensure that they are taking action to reduce the environmental impacts of their businesses
- Identify those goods, including timber and paper, which can be obtained from certified sustainable sources and ensure that these supplies are used
- Work with suppliers to develop markets for environmental technologies, goods and services

Our construction

We will:

- Meet high standards of sustainable construction in all new KCC buildings and refurbishments, and in all developments on KCC-owned land. The BREEAM 'very good'/Code for Sustainable Buildings level 3 or equivalent standard is required as a minimum
- Require all new KCC buildings and refurbishments to assess the feasibility of developing on-site renewable energy to help meet energy needs
- Ensure that our estate and roads are planned and managed in ways which minimise the risk of flooding and do not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere
- Seek to avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity and comply with policy and legislative requirements

Our workforce

We will:

- Ensure that our members and employees understand the implications of environmental legislation and regulation, and exceed minimum environmental standards where possible
- Ensure that environmental awareness is raised and good environmental behaviour encouraged through our corporate training, performance appraisal and reward strategies
- Raise awareness of how to comply with all relevant environmental legislation and statutory duties

Our leadership role in the community

We will:

- Lead Kent's communities to a better understanding of the importance of our environment and help them value and enhance the environment locally and globally
- Set out and deliver a vision of environmental excellence with our partners in the Kent Partnership through regular review and implementation of the Kent Environment Strategy

We will set out detailed action plans and guidance for delivery of these commitments, so that colleagues across KCC have a clear basis for decision-making.

This Policy is owned by the KCC Environment Board who may choose to call decision-makers to account for compliance with these commitments and escalate as necessary to the Leader and Chief Executive. Any proposed exceptions to this Policy will need to provide a sound business case based on whole-life economic, social and environmental costs and benefits.

Kent County Council's Corporate Environmental Performance Group will oversee provision of advice and support, monitoring and reporting. In particular, the Group will lead embedding of these commitments in ISO14001 accreditation for the County Council as a whole by 2010. The Group will report via the KCC Environment Board to the Leader and Chief Executive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Carter', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Paul Carter
Leader

Peter Gilroy
Chief Executive

Published December 2007. This Policy and its successful implementation will be reviewed annually by the KCC Environment Board, escalating any changes as necessary to the Leader and Chief Executive.