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To: Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview
Committee – 30th 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. A copy of this report has also been discussed by the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview Committee.

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

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

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 .

- 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 worlds' 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

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

⁴ Indicator 191 Residual household waste per household

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.
- 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

5.1 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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