

**From:** Eric Hotson, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services  
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**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 11 May 2018

**Subject:** Strategy and Policy Control Framework Bi-Annual Update

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway:** CMT (27.06.17), CMM (3.7.17 and 22.08.17), Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee (15.09.17) and CMT (30.01.18)

**Future Pathway:** CMT – June 2018 (date to be confirmed)

**Summary:** This report provides Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee with a six-month progress update on the Strategy and Policy Control Framework, including an analysis of the current Strategy and Policy Register. It outlines the improvements in managing the process since September 2017, challenges and the planned next steps for managing the control framework.

**Recommendation(s):**

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **note** the progress update on the Policy and Strategy Control Framework.
- (2) **agree** to move from a biannual to annual reporting cycle for Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In July 2017, CMT and Cabinet Members agreed KCC's new Policy and Strategy Control Framework. The framework sets out clear principles for the management of KCC's strategic documents to ensure policies and strategies remain up to date, fit for purpose and easily accessible. A consistent cross-directorate approach to policy development and a disciplined way of closing and archiving strategic documents supports the effective management and mitigation of risk. A core aim is to reduce the overall volume of strategy and policy, which is still too high.
- 1.2 A key element of the approach is a single register of the authority's strategic documents in scope of the control framework. The register does not include operational policies and procedures for the management of day to day service delivery. The register is available on KNet and brings together for the first time all the authority's strategic documents in one place, with a one-page summary frontsheet of essential information for each strategy and policy.

- 1.3 Since its introduction, the register has been updated as a live record, with new strategic documents added and old versions of documents closed down and archived. The Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance (SPRCA) division has been tracking the volume of the 'live' register over time and developed a separate record of 'forthcoming' documents.
- 1.4 An initial stock-take of existing documents undertaken last summer led to a proposal to close a number of strategic documents that were out of date, no longer fit for purpose, or that had been replaced by a newer version. This was agreed by CMT and Cabinet Members and the close down list was endorsed by Policy and Resources (P&R) Cabinet Committee in September 2017.
- 1.5 At the September meeting, P&R Cabinet Committee subsequently agreed to receive six monthly updates on the control framework process. This report updates P&R Cabinet Committee on the recent improvements and challenges in managing the control framework. The report summarises the planned next steps and **Appendix A** provides a detailed analysis of the register activity, setting out the latest position as of April 2018.

## **2. IMPROVEMENT AND SUCCESSES**

- 2.1 Since the September 2017 update to P&R Cabinet Committee, positive progress has been made to embed the new process. Notably the KNet register was launched in October 2017 to provide effective corporate oversight and easy access to all the policies and strategies in the live register including to their associated frontsheet and live links to Knet or Kent.gov. The SPRCA division is piloting a new 'SharePoint' site that contains the 'live' register, archived documents and provides the most up to date record of 'forthcoming' strategic documents.
- 2.2 Additionally, the SharePoint site enables access to publication and end dates of all strategic documents, analysis by directorate of live and forthcoming documents, governance and equalities information.
- 2.3 Following P&R Cabinet Committee's agreement to rationalise multiple policies and strategies in September 2017, the SPRCA division has worked closely with relevant policy Accountable Owners to successfully archive 51 out of date policies and strategies and their associated frontsheets.
- 2.4 This has led to a 24% reduction in the number of documents on the live register, which currently stands at 103 strategic documents (down from its initial peak of 136 policies and strategies). All documents that have been closed have been removed from relevant webpages, so only the most current documents are accessible, yet the archived versions are able to be retrieved within KCC if required. This provides a comprehensive record of KCC's policy position over time.

- 2.5 An improvement in corporate oversight of policy and strategy development across the authority has also been achieved. Strong leadership support from CMT has enabled constructive discussions between policy Accountable Owners and the SPRCA division on more effective approaches to developing strategic documents or further rationalisation of policies and strategies (for example in the EODD division, HR and OD documents have been grouped together to support the overarching People Strategy).
- 2.6 Positive relationships with Accountable Owners have been established, with many Accountable Owners now proactively engaging with the SPRCA division when developing new policies and strategies.
- 2.7 To assist robust consideration of equalities in policy and strategy development, a guidance note has been developed for KNet to support staff to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and improve the quality of meaningful equality impact screening when developing a new strategic document.

### **3. CHALLENGES**

- 3.1 The pace and volume of strategy and policy development remains a significant concern and this is set out in detail in **Appendix A** of the report. Whilst a high number of documents have been effectively closed since September 2017, new documents have also been created, published and added to the register. This is compounded by the volume of forthcoming policies and strategies that currently lists 55 potential new documents for publication in 2018/19.
- 3.2 Although some initial progress has been made in reducing the overall number of strategic documents, over time volume has remained significantly high therefore increasing the risk conflicting policy intentions. The development and publication of new documents (which in some cases will involve significant engagement or consultation activity) is resource intensive and this needs careful consideration given KCC's ongoing resource and capacity constraints.
- 3.3 Currently, the majority of forthcoming documents will replace an existing policy or strategy on the current live register (80%). New documents are currently in development (20% of the forthcoming list) in addition to the upcoming replacements already planned for 2018/19 and beyond. This shows that although a high number of documents have been recently closed down (which in principle should have reduced the number of documents on the live register), the overall scope of the register is forecast to increase throughout 2018/19.
- 3.4 In many cases, documents are automatically replaced without robust challenge or consideration as to whether the existing document is still relevant and valid. Many documents could simply be maintained with a new action plan or updated without the need to create an entirely new document.

- 3.5 In most cases, refreshed documents are endorsed by the relevant Cabinet Committee, this is normally at the stage when documents are in final draft and require Cabinet Committee final approval before publication. It is suggested that Cabinet Committees could be involved earlier in the process namely when policy Accountable Owners begin the reviewing process to ensure that Members are able explore a range of options, and inform decision making before final approval (e.g. close, refresh an existing document or develop a new document).
- 3.6 Additionally, the new directorate Business Plans have identified new policies and strategies leading to an increase in the number of documents in the forthcoming list.
- 3.7 Meaningful evidence of consideration of equalities when developing new policies and strategies remains an issue and recent discussions with Accountable Owners have highlighted that evidence of equalities analysis screening is often not recorded early enough in the process.
- 3.8 Currently only 48% of forthcoming documents due to be published by the end of June 2018 have recorded evidence of an EqlA screening in place or in progress. Whilst this is an improvement from 35% in January 2018, it is still too low.
- 3.9 The planned updates to modernise KCC's Constitution provide an opportunity to introduce a robust mandate for the control framework in alignment with good practice examples in other local authorities. Formalising the control framework within the Constitution will help promote and communicate the authority's new approach to managing policy and strategy development and ensure staff are aware and clear on their roles and responsibilities, for example through the mandatory consideration of equalities duties when developing new strategic documents.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 The SPRCA division will continue to manage the live Policy and Strategy Register and provide strategic advice to policy Accountable Owners.
- 4.2 The SPRCA division will also retain responsibility for tracking and updating the forthcoming list of strategic documents, with reports to CMT on progress on a six-monthly basis. In consultation with Accountable Owners, the SPRCA division will as appropriate, close down and archive out of date documents.
- 4.3 The progress achieved since the introduction of the control framework suggests that enhanced oversight of policy and strategy development is expected to continue in the future. P&R Cabinet Committee is asked to agree to receive annual updates on the control framework, to provide oversight of trends and progress over time.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The recommendations are as follows:

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **note** the progress update on the Strategy and Policy Control Framework.
- (2) **agree** to move from a biannual to annual reporting cycle for Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A: Strategy and Policy Register

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