

**By:** Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste

**To:** Environment, Highways & Waste Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 10 November 2009

**Subject:** Draft Kent Environment Strategy --Consultation

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** The Kent Partnership's Environment Strategy (KES) is under review. The re-draft has recently been endorsed by the Kent Partnership for wider consultation for a 12 week period ending in January 2010. As part of this consultation process, the views of members are sought on this document.

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## **1. Context - Why does Kent need a new Environment Strategy?**

Kent Partnership's Kent Environment Strategy (KES) was first produced in 2003 to underpin and deliver the Vision for Kent. Time lapse and the changing policy environment since then mean that a very different document to its predecessor is needed.

Progress reports produced in 2005 and 2007 highlighted there had been a lot of activity to deliver environmental enhancements but we have not yet achieved the vision of an improving Kent environment for people and business. We still have the challenges of development pressure and ever more evident climate change with seasonal floods, water shortages and heat waves to tackle.

The Kent Regeneration Framework consultation identified a suite of 9 documents, including an Environment Strategy, which would support and deliver it and the Vision for Kent.

## **2. How was the Consultation Document prepared?**

A DEFRA secondee to Kent County Council has been working to a Project Board including the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trusts, Maidstone District Council, and Business Link Kent with guidance from the Kent Economic Board's (KEB) multi-agency Environment Task Group. In addition, three small multi-agency workshops were held over this summer with key stakeholders to develop vision, objectives and ideas for action.

Further to this, the initial thrust of the draft strategy and the emerging themes were tested at a number of fora prior to a draft being developed for consultation. These included:

- Kent and Medway Chief Executives (July 09), booked to revisit 9 November
- Kent Environment Directors Group (May, October)
- Kent Economic Board (July and September)
- Kent Policy Officers Group (September)
- Kent Public Service Board (September)
- Kent Rural Board (July)
- KEB Environment Task Group (May/July) – including representatives from the Police, Fire Service and District Authorities (East, West and Mid Kent)

Kent Partnership endorsed the Draft for consultation on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

This consultation document, at Appendix 1 is effectively an early draft of the Strategy but, in order to help stakeholders understand the evidence and rationale behind the proposals, contains much more information than is proposed for the final Strategy document. Consultees will be asked to identify what are the top priority 9 objectives they wish the Strategy to include.

### **3. What will be different this time?**

The changing policy context requires that environmental challenge such as climate change is translated wherever possible into economic and social opportunity. Time is not on our side so its purpose is to galvanise action on a scale which reverses environmental decline and focuses on benefits to communities, businesses and individuals.

A streamlined and focussed KES is therefore proposed. A 20 year vision for Kent's environment and Kent's impact on the global environment with a small collection of shorter term, high priority objectives revised regularly (3 to 5 years) and which, when delivered, should make a significant change to the quality of the environment in Kent.

The three key themes identified in the consultation have a high degree of fit with the Regional Economic Strategy, the Vision for Kent and the Regeneration Framework. Making the most of the economic opportunities arising from the new low carbon economy will be a cross cutting issue across all themes. The three key themes are:

***Prosperity within our environmental limits*** – Leading Kent towards consuming less resources more efficiently, eliminating waste and minimising pollution

***Rising to the climate change challenge*** – Working towards a lower carbon Kent which is prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of climate change

***Value from our natural and living environments*** – Optimising the real economic and social benefits of high environmental quality while protecting and enhancing the unique natural and built character of Kent.

### **4. How will it be delivered?**

Light touch action plans, reviewed on a yearly basis will deliver the Strategy. As the issues are now highly linked to risk to communities and both risk and opportunity for businesses, much of the delivery of the KES vision will also lie with other emerging Kent and KCC strategies particularly the Environmental Technologies Sector

Strategy, the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Housing Strategy. It is anticipated that environmental and risk management action will grow as an element of most sectors' business planning.

## **5. Consultation plan and timetable**

The consultation covers new ground in terms of measurement of cost-benefit and requires genuine feedback to shape the final strategy. The draft Strategy is now on the Kent County Council website, a copy of the Strategy is being sent to all key Kent stakeholders, every LSP in Kent and Medway visited, the Kent and Medway Chief Executives further consulted to seek views, and 6 public focus groups held.

Subject to the feedback received, formal adoption of the final Strategy by members of the Kent Partnership and the County Council as part of its own Policy Framework would be sought early in 2010.

## **6. Recommendations**

Members are invited

- a) to note and discuss the Draft Kent Environment Strategy, such that views of members form part of the formal consultation process
- b) to submit their detailed comments individually to the lead officer as soon as possible .

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