

From: Paul Carter, Leader of the Council
Eric Hotson, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services
David Cockburn, Corporate Director Strategic and Corporate Services and Head of Paid Service

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 13th June 2019

Subject: Developing the next Strategic Statement

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway: CMT (28.05.19), Cabinet Members (03.06.19)

Future Pathway: County Council (by March 2020)

Summary: The current five-year Strategic Statement sets out KCC's strategic outcomes and is due to end in 2020. This paper sets out the need to begin the development of the next Strategic Statement, how this could support national and local policy objectives and stronger resident engagement.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Consider and endorse** the approach for the development of the next Strategic Statement.
- (2) **Endorse** the approach for early resident engagement to inform the next Strategic Statement.

1. Background

1.1 The County Council has previously agreed a number of Strategic Statements, *The Next Four Years* (1997–2001) *The Next Five Years* (2001–2006), *Towards 2010* (2006–2010), *Bold Steps for Kent* (2010–2014). Each of the statements set out a strategic vision and objectives for KCC that reflects the context, circumstances and challenges facing the County Council at that particular time, and as such, each of the Strategic Statements is very different to the last.

1.2 *Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes* was approved by County Council in March 2015, as the Council's five-year vision. It supported our ambition to become a Strategic Commissioning Authority and set out three strategic and twenty supporting outcomes that we want to achieve for residents, businesses and communities.

- **Outcome 1:** Children and young people get the best start in life

- **Outcome 2:** Kent communities feel the benefits of economic growth by being in-work, healthy and enjoying a good quality of life
- **Outcome 3:** Older and vulnerable residents are safe and supported with choices to live independently.

1.3 As a 'whole council' policy, approved by County Council, it is part of the formal Policy Framework in KCC's Constitution. It influences our financial planning, business planning and strategy and policy development across the authority. It sets a commitment for what we want to achieve for the people of Kent by working together as a Council and with our partners and providers.

1.4 The Strategic Statement outcomes were tested with residents during the formal consultation stage using deliberative events held across the county. This helped to test and refine the outcomes to reflect resident views. This was complemented by formal consultation with other stakeholders including Elected Members, frontline staff and partners.

2. The need for a new Strategic Statement

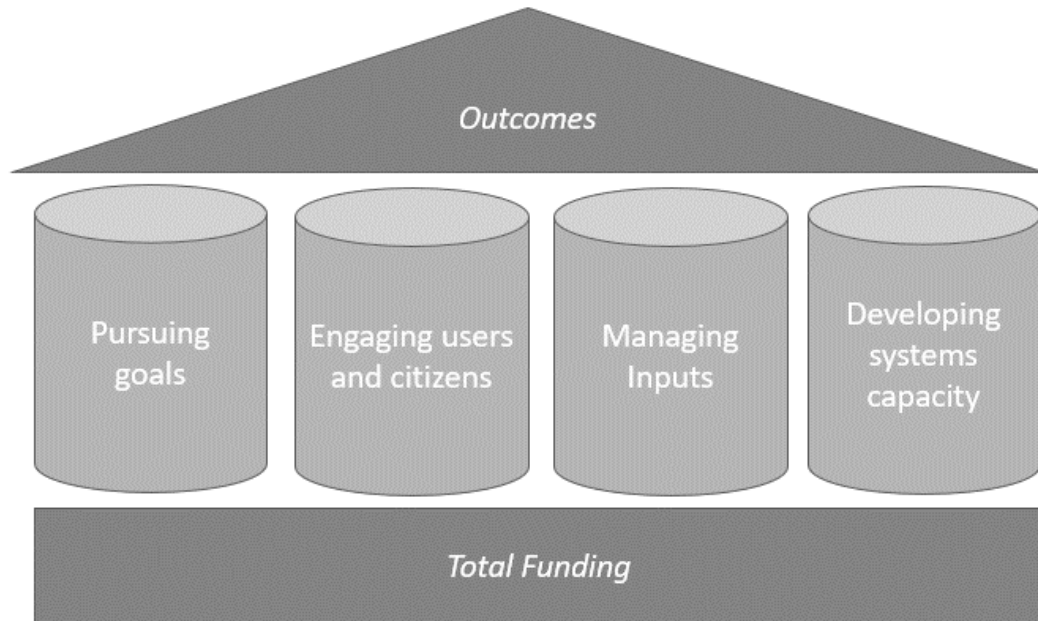
2.1 In March 2020, the current Strategic Statement ends so we need to look ahead to developing a new Strategic Statement. To make a difference to local people, a strategic vision needs to stay relevant and deliver clear objectives. An effective vision needs to resonate with what is most important to our residents and target resources effectively to have a real impact on outcomes.

2.2 Whilst the current Strategic Statement has served the Council well, successfully influencing service design and delivery, strategic commissioning, policy and transformation activity, it is now timely to reflect on what meets the Council's future needs. In many respects the wider context facing the County Council over the next five years is familiar. The fundamentals affecting the Council's finances and services remain the same as those in 2015, a growing and ageing population alongside continued resource constraints place significant demand pressures on our finances and services, whilst the legislative and user expectation of what can be provided continues to grow. Increasing dependency on local growth to fund services creates both an opportunity and a pressure that must be carefully managed alongside the quality of life for existing residents.

2.3 What is different and is likely to remain an issue over the medium-term, is the ability of Westminster and Whitehall to provide leadership and solutions to the financial and service challenges facing local government that once would have been reasonably expected. Whatever the final outcome on Brexit, the confidence and capability of Westminster and Whitehall to operate effectively has been critically weakened, and it will be for local councils, working with their residents, partners and providers to continue to drive forward local solutions to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of services for local residents.

- 2.4 As we have progressed a **Strategic Commissioning Authority** model, more of what we do requires collaboration and integrated working, both within KCC and with our partners. This requires KCC to be 'outward looking' – understanding what is important to our communities and influencing local, regional and national partners to stand up for Kent's best interests. The current strategic outcomes reflect our frontline service delivery, but make it more difficult to reflect both internal KCC cross-cutting and corporate enabling activity, as well as the increasing co-dependency we have with our partners and providers for the design and delivery of services in order to ensure sustainability and quality.
- 2.5 During the review of the **Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP)**, it became clear whilst the current outcomes have provided a logical structure for business plan development, their broad scope and service-specific focus have made it more difficult to prioritise activity. Several Members felt it would be beneficial to move away from numerous supporting outcomes to a smaller number of objectives. Both Members and officers highlighted resident engagement as a potential gap, which could help support more effective prioritisation and ensure a stronger connection between strategic objectives and delivery of significant activity within the Council. Developing the new Strategic Statement during the 2019-20 financial year could align with the development of the next SDP, as a rolling medium term plan.
- 2.6 The expansive scope of the current Strategic Statement is also reflected in KCC's **Strategy and Policy Framework**, which is overseen by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee. With 113 strategic documents on our current register (not including operational policy and procedures), the need for a more focused set of strategic objectives is clear. A new Strategic Statement would provide an opportunity to close outdated documents which are no longer fit for purpose and to refresh or consolidate strategies, with supporting action plans to drive accountability for delivery.
- 2.7 We are developing our thinking on how Outcomes Based Accountability and Budgeting could provide oversight of how the resources we invest and manage have an impact on outcomes. A more targeted set of outcomes or objectives would also support Members' role in **budget development**. As local government continues to face a challenging financial environment and we move towards the next Spending Review, difficult policy and efficiency options need to be informed by a clear strategic direction which supports prioritisation within capacity and resource constraints.
- 2.8 This complements the Government's '**Public Value Framework**', which is focused on maximising the value delivered from public spending to improve outcomes which enhance people's lives and economic well-being. This framework is central to both the Treasury and MHCLG's priorities to enhance local government oversight to Central Government and back to citizens and communities, whilst improving effectiveness and efficiency in public services.

Figure 1: The Government's Public Value Framework



- 2.9 A key 'pillar' of the public value framework is '**engaging citizens and users**'. Central Government believes that by collating insights from both citizens and users, it becomes possible for public bodies to focus their efforts on activities that will result in genuine improvements to people's lives to maximise public value and legitimacy in public services. It emphasises how important it is to seek diverse views from a range of citizens not just engage with those who have greatest interest or regular interaction with a policy or service. It also highlights the importance of evidencing how we listen to residents and respond to their feedback.

3. The importance of resident engagement

- 3.1 As we develop the next Strategic Statement it is important that we engage residents in a meaningful discussion about what is important to their quality of life and their views about the work of the County Council. To create a Strategic Statement that improves the lives of people across Kent, we want to engage early with an open discussion and use this thinking to inform our approach. This is a very different approach to the previous consultation, as residents would be engaged in idea creation not just be consulted on a pre-drafted strategic document.

- 3.2 During the development of the current Strategic Statement residents provided valuable feedback about what they felt was important from the engagement process. It can be difficult to engage people in a high-level strategic document, so the process must be authentic and meaningful:
- Residents were genuinely pleased to be involved in a process where they can shape a strategic vision, however they want to feel their input is valued and to be kept informed about how this influences decisions

- Many residents felt that this was a positive learning exercise about the role of the Council, and it enabled them to feel more involved
- Residents wanted the Council to make strong intent-based statements, which are positive and clear about what we want to achieve
- Residents felt it was important that KCC is clear in its roles and responsibilities which are separate from other partners
- Residents want a Strategic Statement which feels directly relevant to them and their quality of life. It needs to be realistic about the resources we have and reflective of the economic climate
- Residents want to know how outcomes will be measured, so it drives action and we can update them on progress.

3.3 In 2015, we not only used deliberative events and online consultation to engage with residents, we also had several existing sources of resident insight and intelligence to draw from. This included the Resident Satisfaction Survey, Environment Survey and Budget Consultation.

3.4 Whilst KCC continues to undertake a wide variety of *service user* engagement, financial and capacity constraints mean mechanisms for *resident* engagement (i.e. the citizen or Council taxpayer perspective) are no longer available to the Council.

4. Proposed approach for resident engagement

4.1 Therefore it is proposed to hold early engagement events with residents in September 2019, to gather views to help shape and inform the development of the next Strategic Statement. These events should be independently recruited and facilitated to ensure a representative sample of residents (e.g. age, gender, socio-economic group, employment status) and create a professionally managed conversation without any unintended bias or judgement.

4.2 Three workshops could be held in different locations across the county, each with around 45 participants. These should encourage open discussion around themes, so as not to constrain debate or pre-determine what form the next Strategic Statement could take. Themes could include:

- Context of Kent County Council services (e.g. different tiers local government service delivery, financial context)
- What is important to residents in public service delivery?
- What is important to residents in their quality of life in Kent?
- What are their relative priorities?
- What do they think about value for money and sufficiency of resources for Kent County Council services?

4.3 The valuable learning from this engagement would not only support the development of the next Strategic Statement, it could also inform budget, policy and business plan development. Our growing understanding of how to use our ICT capabilities in more innovative, productive ways and the success of using our in-house expertise to undertake survey work (e.g. the Staff Survey) means we could potentially develop our own expertise for further in-house resident engagement work in the future.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 An independent research company would be commissioned for the resident engagement events to take place in September 2019. The feedback from these events would be considered by the Executive to inform the future Strategic Statement structure and approach and the next round of the Strategic Delivery Plan.
- 5.2 This would be followed by the development of a draft Strategic Statement for formal consultation, including opportunities for online consultation, open to all residents, partners, staff and other key stakeholders. The consultation feedback would County Council approval by March 2020.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The recommendations are as follows:

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Consider and endorse** the approach for the development of the next Strategic Statement.
- (2) **Endorse** the approach for early resident engagement to inform the next Strategic Statement.

7. Background Documents

- 7.1 'Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes' KCC's Strategic Statement (2015-2020)

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