

From: Roger Gough, Leader of the Council
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To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 21 January 2020

Subject: Updating the Strategy and Policy Control Framework

Past Pathway: Corporate Management Team (26.11.19)

Future Pathway: None

Summary: The Strategy and Policy Control Framework is referenced in KCC's Constitution as part of our internal controls for managing strategic documents. The approach has been updated to better respond to business need and to prepare for KCC's new 5 Year Plan (Strategic Statement).

Recommendations: The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- 1) ENDORSE the updated Strategy and Policy Control Framework in *Appendix A*, which will be reflected in future monitoring; and
- 2) AGREE to continue the Cabinet Committee's role in providing Members oversight of the Strategy and Policy Register for the Council.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Strategy and Policy Control Framework was agreed in September 2017 and is referenced in KCC's Constitution. It provides a consistent way of managing key documents, which set our strategic direction and guide the work of the authority. The approach is managed by the Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance division. The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee provides Member oversight of the Framework.
- 1.2 The aim of the Strategy and Policy Framework is to provide internal control by bringing together clear oversight and accountability for strategy and policy development in one place. It helps to manage risk by maintaining an accurate record of KCC's policy position over time, particularly to provide an archive of policies which may relate to decision making.
- 1.3 It sets out a simple set of principles that all strategic documents must comply with. These are referenced in KCC's **Operating Standards** to ensure officers do so in a consistent way. The Named Accountable Owner of each document is responsible for ensuring that the principles are followed.
- 1.4 The core part of the Framework is the **Strategy and Policy Register** which acts as a single repository for all strategic documents. The register ensures an up-to-date record is maintained and kept accessible on KNet (intranet). Each document in scope has a single 'front sheet' of essential information including the statutory basis, equality considerations, governance and end/review date for the document.

1.5 Forthcoming and live strategic documents are reviewed on a monthly basis, using Microsoft SharePoint and Power BI to monitor the overall KCC position in a productive, efficient way. Outdated documents are closed, archived and removed from web pages to ensure only the most relevant documents are transparent and accessible.

2. Rationalising KCC's Strategy and Policy Register

2.1 When the Strategy and Policy Register was first presented to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee in September 2017, there were 136 documents identified within scope. The ambition was to rationalise the number of documents, to delete outdated strategies and policies and ensure those remaining were fit for purpose.

2.2 However, despite positive progress to archive 91 documents, rationalising the scale of the Register has remained challenging, largely due to a culture of automatic 'refresh and replacement' of existing documents. By November 2019, there were still 106 documents on the register, with a consistently high number of 'forthcoming' documents in development. It should be noted that this is above and beyond hundreds of operational policies covering detailed practice in social care, health and safety and property, amongst others.

2.3 With KCC's new 5 Year Plan (Strategic Statement) being developed for March 2020, Corporate Management Team (CMT) saw the opportunity to update and refresh the Framework. The objective was to take a more rigorous approach to remove unnecessary documents and sharpen up definitions for what should be included in the register.

2.4 CMT agreed the scope of the register should be updated to focus on '**council and service strategy**' - documents which set KCC's strategic direction. This would make it easier and simpler for staff to undertake strategy/policy development and support better policy alignment.

- **Council Strategies** - documents which are critical to the delivery of KCC's Strategic Statement (5-year plan) outcomes or part of KCC's Formal Policy Framework in the Constitution (approved by full County Council)
- **Service Strategies** - documents which set the vision, priorities and policy response for specific services or themes
- Given the collaborative nature of much of our work, both KCC and Partnership strategies remain in scope.

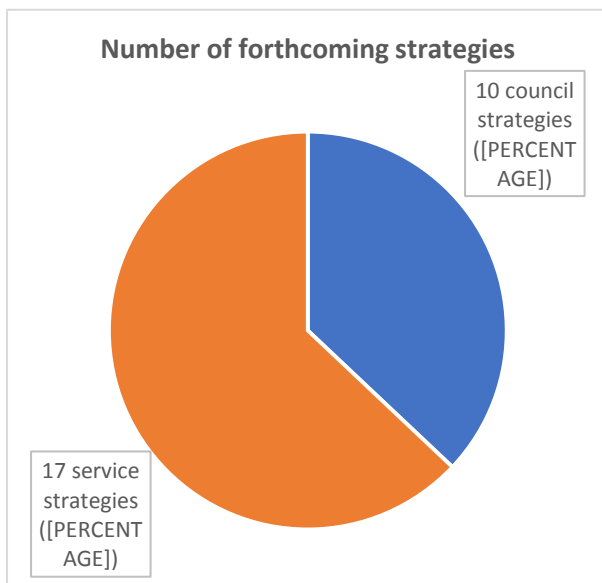
2.5 A particular challenge in the overall volume of documents was the '**internal control policies**' owned by the Strategic and Corporate Services directorate, which set out how we do things in KCC, many of which support a statutory duty. CMT agreed that whilst internal control policies should be kept accessible on KNet, they should be excluded from the scope of the Register.

2.6 CMT reviewed the Register against the new definitions and agreed to remove 47 documents, including operational and internal control policies and action plans. KNet is being updated to ensure that operational documents which support staff to carry out management tasks effectively remain available. Any documents which were outdated have been appropriately archived.

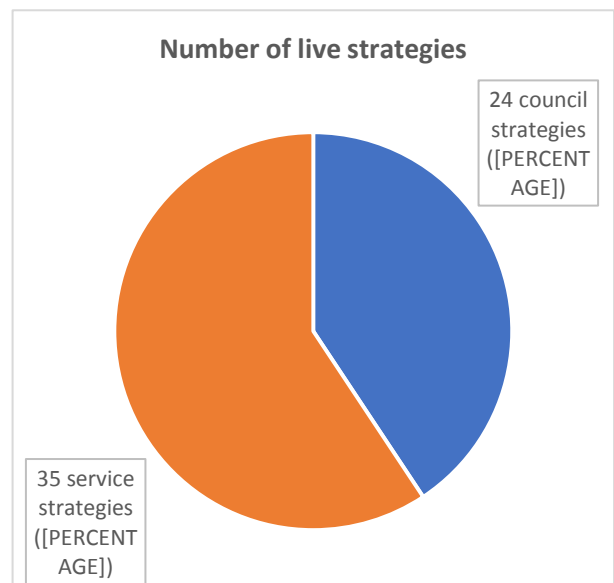
2.7 This has helped rationalise the Register to a more manageable scope of 59 live documents, with a further 27 forthcoming strategies in development. This puts KCC in a strong position to better align strategic documents to the outcomes in the new 5 Year Plan from March 2020. An updated summary of the Register is available below, which shows total numbers by directorate and whether they are council or service strategies.

STRATEGY AND POLICY REGISTER – UPDATED POSITION (JAN 2020)

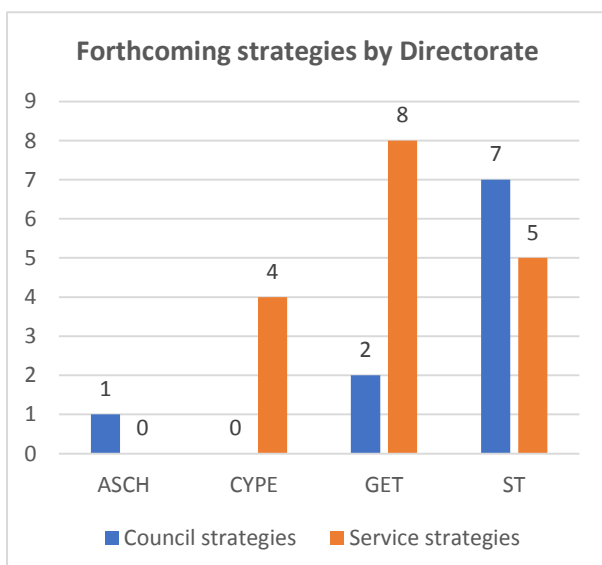
Total of 27 forthcoming strategies



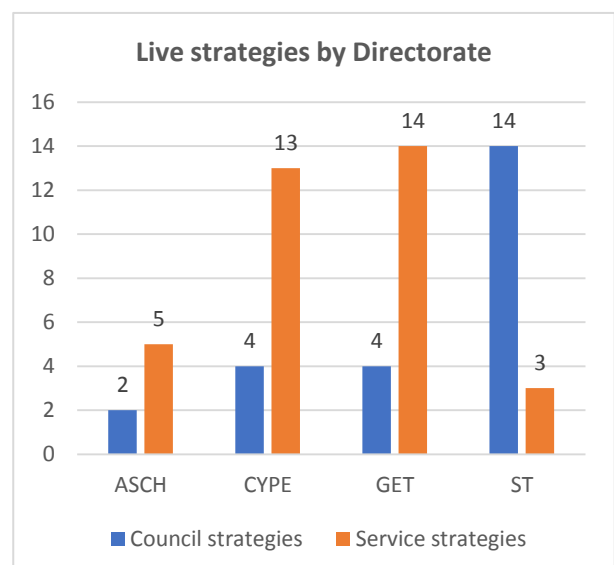
Total of 59 live strategies



Number of forthcoming strategies by Directorate



Number of live strategies by Directorate



- 2.8 The updated Register will make it clearer for staff which are the most significant strategic documents they need to refer to. We know from the Staff Survey it is an ongoing challenge for staff to understand how they relate to the strategic direction of the authority and a new 5 Year Plan and rationalised Strategy and Policy Register could make this much simpler.
- 2.9 However, this is not just a volume issue - a more streamlined Register provides an opportunity to think about the **quality** of strategy development. By focusing on council strategy we can better ensure the right strategies are in place to underpin the delivery of the new outcomes and objectives in the emerging 5 Year Plan. It also helps to consider how strategy could cover a range of cross-cutting policy areas, rather than produce multiple 'service' strategy documents based on specific issues. An example would be moving from a Voluntary and Community Sector Policy, Kent Compact, Grants Policy and work on loneliness and social isolation, into a broader Civil Society Strategy.
- 2.10 Moreover, this could help us to reflect and challenge whether service strategy objectives could be achieved in another way (e.g. an action plan or by consolidating inter-related documents). This would help to further rationalise the Register over time.

3. The updated Strategy and Policy Control Framework

- 3.1 The principles in the Strategy and Policy Control Framework (*Appendix A*) have been reviewed and updated to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- 3.2 One of the main updates to strengthen the Control Framework was to create clear standards for strategy and policy development. It is unlikely to be practical or desirable to move to a single template for all strategic documents, however, there are common standards which all strategies could follow to enhance their consistency and quality (*Appendix A, Section 7*).
- 3.3 More consistent strategy development could better support equality duties and provide more consistent alignment with other inter-related documents (e.g. a property strategy should be consistent with our environmental policies).
- 3.4 The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee has provided valuable Member oversight of the process since 2017. The Committee is asked to endorse the updated Strategy and Policy Control Framework and continue this oversight role of strategy and policy development through regular monitoring. An updated list of all the forthcoming and live strategies is provided in *Appendix B*.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:
- 1) ENDORSE the updated Strategy and Policy Control Framework in *Appendix A*, which will be reflected in future monitoring.
 - 2) AGREE to continue the Cabinet Committee's role in providing Members oversight of the Strategy and Policy Register for the Council.

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Updated Strategy and Policy Control Framework (Nov 2019)
Appendix B – Strategy and Policy Register (Jan 2020)

8. Author and Responsible Director

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