

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO TAKEN BY

Mike Whiting
Cabinet Member for Environment

DECISION NO:

20/00096

For publication

Key decision*

No

Subject: Kent County Council's participation in the Straits Committee

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development I agree to::

Confirm the participation of Kent County Council in the Straits Committee;

Approve funding of £100,000 from reserves for activities connected to the Straits Committee. These will include support to joint initiatives on economic development, tackling climate change, supporting young people and any initiatives in other policy areas as agreed within the Straits Committee; the development of a strategy for the Straits Committee; the hosting of a Straits conference in Kent; and the setting up of a small project support scheme; and

Agree delegated authority for management of that funding to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development.

Reason(s) for decision:

Kent County Council has longstanding memoranda of understanding with the French Hauts-de-France region, the Pas-de-Calais Département, and the Belgian Province of West Flanders. These relationships have led to many joint initiatives over time – often supported by cross-border funding mechanisms - in areas such as trade, tourism, education, social care, transport and the environment.

Over the last three years, meetings between Kent County Council, its continental partners and other continental authorities have shown a desire to continue local-to-local cooperation where it may be of mutual benefit. Kent was encouraged by the UK diplomatic service to formalise this into a new relationship and, on 5th February 2020, Kent County Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with neighbouring French, Belgian and Dutch local authorities to create the Straits Committee.

The Straits Committee is a new, voluntary partnership between Kent County Council and neighbouring Belgian, Dutch and French local authorities bordering the Dover Straits and the Channel-North Sea area. The aim is to initiate a new, flexible and efficient way of working together to create opportunities for mutual benefit and pursue lasting good neighbourly relations.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposal is being considered by the Members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 25th September.

Any alternatives considered:

- Do nothing: While the MOU does not place any legal requirements on Kent County Council

(KCC), the failure to adopt this decision would call into question KCC's ongoing involvement in the Straits Committee and ability to support joint initiatives, including related spend activity. This would lead to a weakening of relations with KCC's European partners at a time when the UK is seeking close ties and friendly cooperation with neighbouring countries.

- Adopt a decision approving Kent's involvement in the Straits Committee and associated budget (Preferred option): This would align KCC's participation in the Straits Committee with KCC's governance and provide a mechanism for supporting joint initiatives with spend activity.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date

Name: