

From: **Susan Carey, Cabinet Member for the Environment**
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport
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To: **Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee,**

Subject: **Annual update on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy**

Non-Key decision

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: **None**

Future Pathway of report: **None**

Electoral Division: **ALL**

Summary: This report provides the second annual update on the implementation of the Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy. The report focuses on the amendments proposed for the 2024 implementation plan.

Overall, delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is again RAG rated as Amber. This reflects that broadly the strategy is on track, but there are significant risks and issues in some areas. Chief among these is resourcing, both in terms of the staff to deliver the actions and the finance required to deliver agreed projects and outputs. It should be noted that this is a partnership strategy, and as such the resourcing issue does not sit solely with KCC but applies across partners.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the second year of progress on delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy for Kent & Medway and endorse the progression of the proposed areas for future delivery of the strategy at paragraph 4.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, adopted in 2020, sets out how KCC, in partnership with Medway Council and the Kent district and borough councils, will respond to the UK climate emergency and drive clean, resilient economic recovery across the county. The overarching vision is for the county of Kent to reduce its emissions to net-zero by 2050 and to benefit from a competitive, innovative, and resilient low carbon economy, with no deaths associated with poor air quality. The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sits within the framework of, and supports, the Kent Environment Strategy, published in 2016. The 2050 target sits alongside, but is separate to, KCC's commitment to achieving net-zero by 2030 for its own estate.

- 1.2 The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is supplemented by an implementation plan, which sets out the detailed actions required between October 2020 and December 2023. The second implementation plan was published in July 2022. This report primarily updates on delivery against that implementation plan for 2022, as well as the amendments proposed for the 2024 implementation plan.
- 1.3 All districts, as well as Medway, have either formally endorsed, or recognised the strategy and have been involved in developing and updating the implementation plan. Partners have taken different approaches to how they view the implementation plan, with some endorsing the plan through their formal governance systems, and others continuing to be involved in delivery without formally adopting the plan.

2. Delivery to date

- 2.1 A full report covering delivery to date for 2022 on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (the ELES progress report) is available at appendix 3. This report has been compiled through extensive engagement with all delivery partners and named priority leads.
- 2.2 Overall, delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is RAG rated as amber. This reflects that broadly the strategy is on track, but there are significant risks and issues in some areas. Of the 78 actions, 13 are RAG rated red, 29 amber and 36 green. This shows a considerable improvement in implementation since the first year, (year 1 figures for comparison were 15 red, 30 amber and 33 green).
- 2.3 In many cases the red RAG rating reflects the funding gaps for the projects. Chief among these is resourcing, both in terms of the staff to deliver the actions and the finance required to deliver agreed projects and outputs. There are also issues such the availability of trained staff and materials. Some of the projects have funding that ends in June 2023 and the proposed implementation plan amendments address this in terms of identifying alternative funding options. Other programmes are stalled due to delays in secondary legislation. It should be noted that resourcing issue does not sit solely with KCC but applies across partners.

3. Measuring progress

- 3.1 The most important indicator for progress on the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is the total carbon dioxide emissions for Kent and Medway. There is a lag in the reporting of this data as it is compiled by the Department for Energy and Net-Zero. Once the nationally reported data is released for 2021, (the first operational year of the implementation plan) it will be feasible to start tracking emissions against activity, with some caveats (see paragraph 3.2). This data should be available later in 2023.
- 3.2 For reference, a report to this committee in June 2021 outlined possible pathways to 2050, modelled by the sustainability consultants Anthesis. The link to this report can be found at 11.4. The report set out a business-as-usual

pathway, a high ambition pathway, and a Paris compliant pathway that would not exceed our carbon budget.

- 3.3 The Anthesis report and pathway was based on currently available emissions factors, current legislation, and government policy, published emission scenarios and proven technologies. As such, it should be understood that compliance with the pathway does not guarantee that Kent and Medway will meet the Net Zero 2050 target and is not fully compliant with the targets of the United Nations Paris Agreement (limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C). Nonetheless, the high ambition pathway provides a realistic approach that will need to be supplemented by emerging technologies and future changes to legislation if Kent and Medway are to meet the 2050 target for net-zero.
- 3.4 Following extensive discussions with partners, the list of associated indicators has been refined. The intention is to report on these indicators annually. We will also seek to make these lead indicators more sophisticated over time to more accurately predict the impact of changes in overall emissions. The updated list of indicators is available at appendix 2, (ELES indicators 2017 – 2022 updated Feb 2023).

4. Next steps for delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

- 4.1 The implementation plan for the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is under review to ensure that actions remain up to date and appropriate for our ambitions. Where actions from the previous plan have been completed, they have been removed or replaced. Partners have also taken the opportunity to highlight where they think action points need amending or where there are gaps in our collective approach.
- 4.2 The Implementation Plan remains a live document. It is formally monitored on an annual basis at financial year end and reported to the Kent and Medway Environment Group, the Kent Environment Board and Kent Leaders.
- 4.3 A summary of the proposed updates for the 2024 implementation plan are detailed in appendix 1.
- 4.4 Further case studies and an infogram of highlights of 2022 progress are being prepared to highlight best practice.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 This is an update report so does not in itself have financial implications, but it does highlight areas where finance will impact future implementation which will be raised with Members **on a project specific basis**.
- 5.2 KCC's commitment to delivering ELES is demonstrated through the core funding of the Environment team. The reorganisation of this team went live in June 2023. The team is working with colleagues from across the partnership to leverage additional resources from both the public and private sector in order to support the delivery of this strategy.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 No legal implications have been identified. Legal advice will be sought where necessary for any delivery under the strategy.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken when the strategy was developed and was updated as a result of the public consultation. This has been reviewed in the preparation of this report and no material changes have been identified as a result of the modified action plan. As this strategy is aimed at improving health outcomes, there are likely to be more positive equality impacts than negative, particularly for age, maternity, and disability.

8. Other corporate implications

- 8.1 The ELES is at heart a partnership strategy and covers multiple themes. Within KCC, the delivery of the ELES is dependent on teams from across the organisation working together to support the delivery of this strategy.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The annual review process, detailed in appendix 1, has highlighted significant successes over the past year and is testament to the collaborative approach being taken by partners across Kent and Medway. Whilst these successes should be celebrated, the scale of the challenge and pace of change needed over the coming years to meet our ambitions cannot be overstated. The gaps in resourcing to deliver against the ELES implementation plan represent a real risk to delivery and to net-zero targets for the county. Activity to address these gaps remains the key priority for delivery of the strategy.

10. Recommendation(s):

- 10.1 The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the second year of progress on delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy for Kent & Medway and endorse the progression of the proposed areas for future delivery of the strategy at paragraph 4.

- 11.1 Kent Environment Strategy – www.kent.gov.uk/environmentstrategy

- 11.2 Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Page – [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy - Kent County Council](#)

- 11.3 Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy: Implementation Plan 2020-2023 – [Kent-and-Medway-Energy-and-Low-Emissions-Strategy-Implementation-Plan-2020-2023.pdf](#)

- 11.4 Kent & Medway Emissions Analysis and Pathways to net-zero - https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/122898/Kent-Emissions-Pathway-Report.pdf

Appendix 1 : ELES Implementation Plan Action amendments 2024.
Appendix 2 : ELES indicators 2017 – 2022 updated Feb 2023
Appendix 3 : ELES Progress report 2022

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