

From: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 29 November 2019

Subject: Kent Resilience Forum Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan

Decision No: 19/00074

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

The KCC Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan has been updated, expanded and, due to its multi-agency content, re-designated as a KCC-led Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) document. New risks such as non-native mosquitoes and more detailed local planning in relation to Ashford Livestock Market and safeguards for welfare of animals in transit have been incorporated into the revised plan.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked (as shown at Appendix A) to:

- Endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the principle of re-designation of the corporate Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan as a KCC-led KRF document; and
- Endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on scope and content of the Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan.

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council is a 'Category 1 Responder' within the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and is legally bound to ensure plans are in place to respond to threats to life, property and the environment. For Kent, a 'major outbreak of exotic notifiable disease in animals' and 'notifiable plant diseases

and notifiable exotic invertebrate species destructive of plants' are both identified as significant risks within the KRF Community Risk Register. These risks to animal and plant health are a real concern for agricultural and land management industries and the wider community.

- 1.2 To support the effective planning for and response to such risks, KCC has in place an Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan. This Plan has previously been utilised as a template for similar plans as far afield as South Africa, and the County Council's emergency planning team has worked closely with Government on a number of specific issues arising from the plan – including sitting on the national Ash Dieback Health and Safety Task Group.
- 1.3 This report presents a revised version of the Emergency Plan for consideration by Cabinet Committee following a review undertaken with partners both within and beyond KCC.

2. Plan Updates

- 2.1 The scope of and audience for the Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan has been expanded and changed to reflect the multi-agency nature of this agenda. As such, the Plan is now presented as a Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) plan led by KCC, rather than a KCC corporate plan. Updates and revisions complement this transformation from a single agency to a multi-agency document.
- 2.2 The implications arising from a changing climate and associated expansion in some animal and plant disease ranges are also addressed within the updated Emergency Plan.
- 2.3 A notable addition to the revised Emergency Plan is a section addressing non-native mosquito species, some of which can act as vectors for serious human disease. Indeed, this issue was recently highlighted within the Government Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry into the impact of invasive species. The new appendix on non-native mosquito species and associated pathogens was developed with Buglife, the Dipterists Forum, Public Health England and Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre.
- 2.4 The revised Emergency Plan further incorporates new content addressing Ashford Livestock Market, resting fields and other welfare considerations for animals in transit. These additions are complementary to local planning for EU withdrawal.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 All costs associated with drafting, upkeep and associated training and exercising for this plan are covered by the core Resilience and Emergency Planning Service budget. Indeed, through improving the effectiveness of planning, response and recovery, the updated plan seeks to enable more cost-effective use of staff, assets and other County Council resources.
- 3.2 Historically, animal and plant health emergency response activity in Kent has resulted in significant expenditure by the County Council, notably during the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2000/2001. This outbreak was estimated by the National Audit Office to have cost the UK economy £8.6 billion, including £3 billion in direct costs to the public sector. It is estimated that the total impact could have been reduced by 40% if all infected premises had been dealt with within 48 hours of detection. Responses to recent Avian Influenza, Asian Longhorn Beetle and Ash Dieback outbreaks within the County have also resulted in significant expenditure by KCC services, including Resilience and Emergency Planning, Trading Standards and Highways. The Emergency Plan presented with this report seeks to further enhance local preparedness for any future such outbreaks.

4. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

- 4.1 The following legislation applies in relation to KCC and partner statutory duties and powers in the event of a notifiable or other serious animal or plant disease outbreak in the County: Civil Contingencies Act 2004; Animal Health Act 1981 (amended by Animal Health Act 2002); Aquatic Animal Health (England & Wales) Regulations 2009; Communities Act 1972; Plant Health Act 1967; Plant Health (England) Order 2015; and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. KCC is responsible for implementation and enforcement across a range of provisions included within these acts, including a number of Government responsibilities where the County Council acts as the enforcement agency.
- 4.2 In addition to legal and regulatory compliance obligations, animal and plant disease outbreaks can have a profound impact upon the wider economy, especially agriculture, tourism and the natural environment. Kent County Council has established a hard-won reputation for robust and effective leadership during the response to recent serious animal and plant disease outbreaks, including Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza and latterly Ash Dieback. The proximity of Kent to continental Europe and its gateway status for both people and goods places the county at the frontline of potential animal and plant health threats and constant vigilance and effective planning and response contingencies are therefore vital.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The draft plan is currently undergoing a consultation across KRF partners. This consultation will be concluded on the 25th November 2019.
- 5.2 The feedback from partners as well as the feedback from this Cabinet Committee will be used to inform a final version of the draft which the Cabinet Member for Regulatory and Community Services will sign off for KCC and which will subsequently be proposed for KRF sign off in February 2020.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Updates to the Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan reflect legal and regulatory changes and the latest science within this area of resilience policy and practice. It is hoped that repositioning as a KCC-led KRF emergency plan will ensure wider partner engagement and enable more effective multi-agency co-operation to manage evolving threats and challenges.
- 6.2 The changes proposed are all designed to increase the value and influence of an already highly regarded and ground-breaking emergency plan.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to address the implications of animal and plant health disease outbreaks for individuals and communities. Effective arrangements to support affected communities are delivered through the revised and updated Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan and associated contingency planning.

8. GDPR Considerations

- 8.1 Emergency planning and response sometimes require the County Council to collect, use and be responsible for certain personal information to ensure an appropriate response can be delivered. The General Data Protection Regulation means that the County Council will be responsible as a 'controller' of that personal information.

9. Recommendation(s):

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- Endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on scope and content of the Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan.

10. Appendices and Background Document

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B - KRF Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan EqIA
- Animal and Plant Health Emergency Plan Public Version:
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5768&ID=5768&RPID=32964073>

11. Contact Details

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