

## **CABINET**

**12 JANUARY 2021**

### **KENT AND MEDWAY ENERGY AND LOW EMISSIONS STRATEGY – FORMAL ADOPTION**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Doe, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive

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#### **Summary**

The report provides an update on the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (KMELES) and presents it for formal adoption by the Cabinet.

The Strategy will inform the Council's emerging Climate Change Action Plan. Where new funding is required to tackle the climate emergency, this would also need to be agreed by Council.

This report was considered by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 December 2020. The comments of this Committee are set out in section 6 of the report.

1. Budget and policy framework
  - 1.1. The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (Appendix 1) forms part of the Kent Environment Strategy and Implementation Plan. It is also relevant to the Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework.
  - 1.2. In April 2019, Full Council declared a climate change emergency in Medway. Responding to this declaration fits with the Council Strategy priority 'Medway: A place to be proud of' and the key outcome of a 'clean and green environment'.
  - 1.3. The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is a key element of the Council's approach to tackling the climate emergency and is currently informing the Council's emerging Climate Change Action Plan.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. The purpose of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is to identify an evidence-based pathway to deliver clean growth, and specifically, strategies and actions to eliminate poor air quality, reduce fuel poverty and deliver an affordable, clean and secure energy supply for Kent and Medway. The Strategy includes the commitment to meet the UK Government's target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 for the country.

## 3. Consultation and Formal Adoption Pathway

- 3.1 The Strategy has been produced by Kent County Council following a public consultation period during July-September 2019.
- 3.2 Medway Council, along with all other Kent local authorities, were invited to participate and responded to the consultation on the Draft Strategy and engaged further in an Implementation Plan workshop at the end of 2019.
- 3.3 Following the evaluation of comments received during the consultation process, a final Draft Strategy was produced with 10 high level priorities identified for action. The Strategy was further reviewed and amended during May 2020 to account for Covid-19.
- 3.4 The Strategy has been approved by the Kent Chief Executives Group and Kent Leaders Group with the Leader as co-signatory. The Strategy was formally launched by Kent County Council at the Kent and Medway Net-Zero Conference on 27 November 2020.
- 3.5 Local authorities across Kent are now being asked to take the Strategy through their own internal processes for formal adoption.
- 3.6 Medway Council's Cabinet has previously been made aware of the significance of the Strategy during its development (Please refer to Background Papers 1,2 and 3 ).

## 4. Options

- 4.1 The objective of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is to outline a joint Kent and Medway approach to achieving a reduction in carbon emissions and improvements in air quality, with an agreed Kent and Medway target of net-zero emissions by 2050.
- 4.2 The aims of the strategy are:
  1. EVIDENCE: Provide an ongoing evidence and intelligence base; linking data sets to identify hot spots and opportunities, and to build the business case for action across Kent and Medway.

2. **POLICY AND STRATEGY:** Facilitate the development of evidence based policy and strategy to future proof growth, tackle emerging issues and realise opportunities.
  3. **LEADERSHIP:** Support the public sector across Kent and Medway to play a strong leadership role with regards to challenges and opportunities.
  4. **ACTION:** Facilitate increased and accelerated action and implementation across Kent and Medway.
- 4.3 10 priority actions have been identified and link directly to a detailed Implementation Plan which is being finalised. A summary of the actions is given in Table 1 below. The full set of priority actions can be found on pages 15 to 28 of the Strategy.
- 4.4 Medway Council officers are developing a separate Medway Climate Change Action Plan in discussion with the Climate Change Member Advisory Group which is scheduled for presentation to Cabinet in spring 2021. The Plan will inform both Business as Usual as well as how we will achieve net-zero carbon emissions as an organisation and across the wider Medway area. The 10 priority actions will further link to the Medway Climate Change Action Plan to ensure a cohesive approach. Progress will be monitored and reported through Service Plans, the Climate Change Member Advisory Group and Cabinet. Progress will be celebrated through the annual Kent Environment Strategy Impact Report.

<b>Table 1: Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy 10 Priority Actions</b>
<p><b>PRIORITY 1: EMISSION REDUCTION PATHWAYS TO 2050</b> Set area and organisational five-year carbon budgets and emission reduction pathways to 2050, with significant reduction by 2030.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 2: PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION MAKING</b> Develop a consistent approach across Kent and Medway, to assess, manage and mitigate environmental impacts (both positive and negative), resulting from public sector policies, strategies, service delivery, commissioning and procurement.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 3: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT</b> Ensure climate change, energy, air quality and environmental considerations are integrated into Local Plans, policies and developments, by developing a clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework for Kent and Medway, to drive down emissions and mainstream climate resilience.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 4: CLIMATE EMERGENCY INVESTMENT FUND</b> Establish a trusted Kent and Medway 'Climate Emergency' carbon sequestration, offset and renewable energy investment scheme and fund.</p>

<p><b>PRIORITY 5: BUILDING RETROFIT PROGRAMME</b> Set up a Kent and Medway net-zero buildings retrofit plan and programme for public sector, domestic and businesses.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 6: TRANSPORT, TRAVEL AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY</b> Set up a smart connectivity and mobility modal shift programme – linking sustainable transport, transport innovations, active travel, virtual working, broadband, digital services, artificial intelligence and behaviour change.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 7: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION</b> Set up an opportunities and investment programme for renewable electricity and heat energy generation.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE</b> Develop a multi-functional, natural capital opportunity and investment programme – focusing on environmental projects that store carbon, increase climate change resilience, improve air quality and increase biodiversity.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 9: SUPPORTING LOW CARBON BUSINESS</b> Develop a support programme for Kent and Medway’s Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services sector.</p>
<p><b>PRIORITY 10: COMMUNICATIONS</b> Develop a comprehensive communications, engagement and behaviour change programme targeted at residents, employees, businesses and visitors.</p>

5. Advice and analysis

5.1 The intention of the Strategy is to recognise the climate emergency and the need to take significant joined up action in the next 10 years to be able to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

5.2 Recommending the adoption of the Strategy serves to not only acknowledge its relevance in setting out a consistent approach to net zero emissions but also realises the significance of working in partnership at scale. It offers an opportunity to pool the resources and expertise required to address the climate emergency, which Medway Council has committed to do.

6. Regeneration Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 3 December 2020

6.1 The Committee was requested to give consideration to the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy ahead of it being considered by Cabinet on 12 January 2021.

6.2 The Strategy had been produced by Kent County Council following a public consultation carried out during July to September 2019 and Medway Council,

along with other Kent local authorities had been invited to participate and respond as part of the consultation process.

- 6.3 Following the evaluation of comments received during the consultation process, a final draft Strategy had been produced with 10 high level priorities identified for action. The Strategy had been further reviewed and amended during May 2022 to account for Covid–19.
- 6.4 Local authorities across Kent were now being asked to take the strategy through their own internal process for formal adoption.
- 6.5 The Committee sought clarification as to why Kent and Medway had set a target of net-zero emissions by 2050 when other local authorities had set a shorter timescale. In response, the Environmental Protection Team Leader advised that when reviewing the Strategy, consideration had been given to setting the target for net-zero emissions at 2030, but Kent County Council had decided to retain the target at 2050.
- 6.6 The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that Medway officers were in the process of developing a separate Medway Climate Change Action Plan in discussion with the Climate Change Member Advisory Group which was scheduled for presentation to Cabinet in Spring 2021.
- 6.7 Referring to the priority actions, the Committee sought an assurance that the aspirations of the Strategy were supported across the Council and the Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive gave an assurance that climate change was a corporate priority for the Council and there was a willingness to be involved across the Council. In addition, climate change formed an important part of the Council's bid for City of Culture.
- 6.8 The Committee noted the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy prior to its submission to Cabinet on 12 January 2021 for formal consideration and adoption.

## 7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is not formally adopted by the Council*  *There are no recognised risks from adopting the Strategy	This could result in Medway applying an inconsistent approach to the rest of Kent in the reduction of carbon emissions /improvement to air quality. It could limit opportunities for joint partnership working and access to shared resources/intelligence. This could further result in not being able to meet	Formal adoption and commitment to the delivery of the Strategy	B2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	expectations at pace and the overall net zero target.		

## 8. Climate change implications

8.1 The Strategy is intended to have a direct positive impact on climate change and the Council's developing action plans. The impact will be monitored and reported through Service Plans, the Climate Change Member Advisory Group and Cabinet.

## 9. Financial implications

9.1 This report relates to the Strategy itself and not individual costed actions. As future projects are developed, the supporting evidence and any cost implications will be identified, and the business case outlined through the appropriate governance processes. Tackling the climate emergency will require the Council to develop a robust financial strategy and commitment to a significant level of investment, which is far in excess of the existing budget provision.

## 10. Legal implications

10.1 The Climate Change Act 2008 places national targets on the reduction of emissions by 2050. The Council has powers to do anything an individual could, under the power of general competence in the Localism Act 2011. This includes taking steps to reduce Council emissions, which contribute to the local and national targets.

## 11. Recommendation

11.1 The Cabinet is asked to consider the comments of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee set out at section 6 of the report and agree to adopt the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy.

## 12. Suggested reasons for decision

12.1 Approving the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy will support the Council's emerging Climate Change Action Plan and contribute to the Council's actions to address the Climate Change Emergency declared by Council in April 2019.

12.2 The Strategy identifies a list of high-level priorities which will ensure that Kent and Medway will achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

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## Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy](#)

## Background papers

- 1 – [Kent Environment Strategy](#) and [Implementation Plan](#)
- 2 – [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Public Consultation Report](#)
- 3 – Cabinet Reports, [July 2019](#) and [March 2020](#)