

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND
COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

Report prepared by Jim Boot

Date Issued: 17 December 2009

1. Project proposal for Climate change adaptation and re-affirmation of Nottingham Declaration

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider a project proposal designed to meet the council's commitment, both in the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy, to demonstrate its own preparedness for extreme weather incidents associated with climate change and promote adaptation to climate change within the wider community.

1.2 Recommendation of the Assistant Director of Development and Community Strategy

1.2.1 That the cabinet member agrees the objectives, activities and the staff time required to achieve a Level 3 assessment for the National Indicator 188 "Planning to adapt to climate change" by end of March 2011. The key steps are described in the Kent-wide Delivery Plan for NI 188 (Appendix A). It is based on climate change adaptation guidance from the Local and Regional Partnership Board (LRAP)ⁱ and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)ⁱⁱ published in April 2009.

1.2.2 That it is recommended to the Council to re-assert its commitment to the Nottingham Declaration (Appendix B), as a public statement of the council's commitment to adapt to climate change.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

National Indicator NI 188 Adapting to Climate Change

1.3.1 The Council has committed under the second Kent Area Agreement (KA2)ⁱⁱⁱ to prepare itself, other public bodies, charities, businesses and residents for the impacts of climate change.

1.3.2 In addition it will be fulfilling the requirement of the National Indicator 188: "Planning to adapt to climate change" which will in turn contribute positively to the council's forthcoming Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Objectives

1.3.3 In summary the NI 188 objectives are:

- Identify, check and update key vulnerabilities – within the timescale present to November 2009 (Level 1)
- Undertake risk assessments of vulnerabilities to identify a proportionate response – December to March 2010 (Level 2)
- Develop an adaptation action plan – April to November 2010 (Level 3) – achievement of Kent Agreement target

1.3.4 It will also be preparing itself to respond to the Secretary of State's new statutory power under the Climate Change Act 2008, set out in the Local and Regional Partnership (LRAP) Board's Guidance (see italic below), to demand that Local Authorities, in areas vulnerable to climate change impacts (as described in the new Met Office UK Climate Projections also below in italic), can demonstrate a robust approach to climate change adaptation.

'The new Climate Change Act 2008 includes a power for the Secretary of State to require any public body or statutory undertaker to report on its progress on adaptation, if required. This power might be exercised where a body is seen to have specific vulnerabilities but has not taken account of adaptation issues. With this background, there is an expectation that significant public bodies such as Local Authorities will have taken some action on adaptation. The Act also places a duty on Government to publish an assessment of risk to the UK from climate change, its adaptation programme and progress against it. As part of this reporting, the information from NI188 will be an important tool in demonstrating progress on adapting to climate change nationally and shaping future programmes.'

Key findings for South East England, 2080s (Source UK Climate Projections 09)

Medium emissions scenario

- *Under medium emissions, the central estimate of increase in **winter mean temperature** is 3°C; it is very unlikely to be less than 1.6°C and is very unlikely to be more than 4.7°C.*
- *Under medium emissions, the central estimate of increase in **summer mean temperature** is 3.9°C; it is very unlikely to be less than 2°C and is very unlikely to be more than 6.4°C.*
- *Under medium emissions, the central estimate of change in **winter mean precipitation** is 22%; it is very unlikely to be less than 4% and is very unlikely to be more than 50%.*
- *Under medium emissions, the central estimate of change in **summer mean precipitation** is -22%; it is very unlikely to be less than -47% and is very unlikely to be more than 7%.*

1.3.5 The project will enable the council to develop an adaptation plan in line with national best practice that will provide a proportionate and prudent approach to tackling climate change.

1.3.6 The project will enable the council to identify the potential costs, both financial and social, of extreme weather events linked to climate change such as flooding, heat wave, drought and storms and the potential savings from acting in advance to prepare for and reduce them.

1.3.7 It will have identified the potential cost savings of being more prepared for extreme weather events – an existing example would be the switch of resources by Property Services from repairs to maintenance of gutters and drains to reduce damage and more costly repair costs as a result of extreme weather events.

1.3.8 In time it may be able to reduce insurance premiums (both our own and those of other organisations and individuals within the borough) by demonstrating to insurers our adaptive approach.

1.3.9 It will inform future planning and development decisions and identify potential adaptive measures to be fitted retrospectively into existing properties and facilities and infrastructure as well as open spaces, agricultural and horticultural land and semi-natural habitats within the borough.

1.4 What is the scope of the project?

1.4.1 The activities required to demonstrate the achievement of a level 3 self-assessment by March 2011 – the Kent districts' KA2 target – are described in detail in the Kent-wide delivery plan (Appendix A). Already a stock-take of key strategies has been undertaken and submitted to DEFRA (Appendix C) to achieve Level 0. A study of local media reports of extreme weather incidents over the last ten years has been undertaken (Appendix D). A programme of structured interviews is currently being held with heads of service to start to raise awareness of the vulnerabilities, associated costs and responses. This will be followed up by a survey of relevant unit managers to obtain more detailed information. This in turn will be used to populate the Kent-wide Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) which will identify the key vulnerabilities for Maidstone Borough. Combined with the renewed commitment to the Nottingham Declaration, on completion of this work, we will have achieved Level 1.

1.4.2 Next, utilising the council's own risk assessment tool-kit, in a process agreed in principle with the Head of Audit, relevant managers will be involved in small number of workshops to undertake a risk assessment of the key vulnerabilities – the likelihood against their impact – to develop a series of proportionate responses that will form the basis of the adaptation action plan. At this stage we will have achieved Level 2.

1.4.3 The results of the risk assessment process, which includes action planning, will be utilised to develop an overarching adaptation action plan. At this stage we will have achieved level 3.

1.4.4 As part of this process we will be starting to share and work with partners on their own adaptation action planning process through the new Environmental Quality Sub-Group of the LSP. Part of this process will be to

develop an approach of peer challenge both to and by partners to ensure that the adaptive approach is embedded in key organisations across the borough.

1.4.5 The implementation of the adaptation plan, evidenced by performance management reports to the Sub-Group of the LSP from April 2011 will lead to a self-assessment of achievement of Level 4.

1.5 Nottingham Declaration

1.5.1 It is highlighted in DEFRA's 'Self Assessment Guidance and Matrix for National Indicator 188' and the LRAP Guidance that Local Authorities need to publicly demonstrate their commitment to adapting to climate change. The signing of – or in Maidstone Borough Council's case - re-affirmation of its commitment to the Nottingham Declaration is highly recommended as a means of doing this. This public commitment will provide part of the evidence necessary to achieve a Level 1 in the NI 188 Self-Assessment.

1.5.2 The Nottingham Declaration has been developed as a means for local authorities in the UK to commit both to reducing their contribution to climate change (NI 185 CO2 reductions from local authority operations and NI 186 Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in LA area) and adapting to climate change (NI 188 Adapting to climate change).

1.5.3 Maidstone Borough Council, was one of the early signatories of the Nottingham Declaration. However, the declaration has been updated to include a commitment to develop climate change mitigation (carbon reduction) and adaptation plans within two years. As Maidstone's Climate Change Plan 2005-2010 is currently being revised, particularly the aspects relating to carbon reduction under the Energy Saving Trust's One to one Support Programme, it is wholly compatible with this current work and timely to re-affirm our commitment to the Nottingham Declaration.

Objectives

1.5.4 The commitments in the Nottingham Declaration are to:

- Work with central government to contribute, at a local level, to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the target for carbon dioxide reduction by 2010.
- Participate in local and regional networks for support.
- Within the next two years develop plans with our partners and local communities to progressively address the cause and impacts of climate change, according to our local priorities, securing maximum benefit for our communities.
- Publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations, especially energy sourcing and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services.

- Assess the risk associated with climate change and the implications for our services and our communities of climate change impacts and adapt accordingly.
- Encourage all sectors in our local community to take the opportunity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions and to make public their commitment to action.
- Monitor the progress of our plans against the actions needed and publish the result.

1.6 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

NI 188

1.6.1 There is the option of not achieving a Level 3 self-assessment for NI 188 by end of March 2011. However, this would mean failing to achieve a key target in KA2. It may also pave the way for a weaker assessment under CAA. It would also be inconsistent with the identification of Climate Change as a key strategic risk for the council.

Nottingham Declaration

1.6.2 Other districts in Kent have decided not to sign/re-affirm their commitment to the Nottingham Declaration feeling that (a) having signed up to KA2, this is sufficient evidence of their commitment or else (b) that they may have only recently signed the Nottingham Declaration. This is an option for Maidstone Borough Council too. However, it is considered that because (a) Maidstone was an early signatory, (b) signing is compatible to recently agreed policies and actions on carbon reduction, this would be a positive and public means of demonstrating the council's on-going commitment to tackle climate change. While signing the Nottingham Declaration doesn't have a cost, the work from it may incur costs that will need to be met from existing resources or exceptionally from taking an invest to save approach. This will be identified in the risk assessment and action planning phase. However, there are potentially substantial savings for the council, private individuals and private and public bodies alike in terms of being prepared for extreme weather events such as flooding resulting from predicted climate change.

1.7 Impact on Corporate Objectives

NI 188

1.7.1 The achievement of Level 3 is consistent with the key objective within the recently adopted SCS Cross-cutting objective: 'Establish Maidstone Borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate change', Topic objective '8.2 Prepare the Borough's communities and businesses to adapt to climate change – particularly extreme weather incidents such as drought, heat-waves, flooding, and the requirement for adequate drainage to minimise surface run off.' It is also consistent with the priority themes within the strategic plan: 'A place that is clean and green' and 'A place with strong, healthy and safe communities' and the

environmental Excellence and Climate change theme which identifies climate change as 'an important issue for Maidstone, having suffered floods in 2000 and a heat-wave in 2003. Drought is of particular concern as Kent is a drought zone and Maidstone is a particularly susceptible area within Kent.' The section: 'What this means for Maidstone' states: 'Maidstone will be better prepared to adapt to climate change and cope with the changes'.

Nottingham Declaration

1.7.2 Re-affirming the commitment to the Nottingham Declaration is consistent with the objectives within the SCS already mentioned but also with Topic 8.3 'Reduce carbon emissions from fossil fuels across transport, commerce/business and domestic use.' It is also consistent with the Strategic Plan Objective: 'Reduce the Council's carbon emissions through, amongst other activities, the introduction of Environmental Management System and carbon reduction targets.'

1.8 Risk Management

1.8.1 The adaptation project outlined is based upon a risk management approach which will generate a proportionate response. While the council has a well established approach to adapting to climate change, having adopted its first climate change plan in 2005 with a range of adaptive measures, there will be a challenge in encouraging partners, residents and businesses to take a similarly robust approach. There may be specific costs associated with adaptation measures that in the present economic climate may be challenging to resource. However, by taking a proportionate approach, particularly emphasising the financial benefits of being better prepared for any future extreme weather events, it should be possible to make a strong business case for prudent investment.

1.9 Other Implications

1. Financial	X
1. Staffing	
2. Legal	
3. Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
4. Environmental/Sustainable Development	X
5. Community Safety	
6. Human Rights Act	

- 7. Procurement
- 8. Asset Management



1.9.1 The risk assessment process may identify activities/projects that may require additional resources. However, the initial set of interviews with heads of service demonstrates that some measures are already being undertaken within existing budgets ie emergency planning or property maintenance.

1.10 Conclusions

1.10.1 This is a clearly defined project that if the identified activities are completed on time will enable the council to achieve and evidence a Level 3 self-assessment for NI 188 within two years and develop a robust adaptation action plan. It will also put the council in a position to lead and facilitate partners, businesses and residents in improving their own adaptive measures. Because a risk management approach is taken, it may not be possible to quantify the actual savings made should one of the risk scenarios not be realised because of the adaptive measures taken. However, initial work on the Kent Local Climates Impact Programme suggested that extreme weather events in the last five years have resulted in response and clear up costs in the region of £55 million. In time it is possible that insurers may reduce premiums for organisations/areas that can demonstrate a robust approach to climate change adaptation.

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Is this a Key Decision? Yes No

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? August 2009

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes No

Reason for Urgency

[State why the decision is urgent and cannot wait until the next issue of the forward plan.]

ⁱ Adapting to climate change, Guidance notes for NI 188, Local and Regional Partnership Board Version 1.7, April 2009 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localgovindicators/documents/ni188-guidance-2008.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Self Assessment guidance and matrix for National Indicator 188 – Planning to adapt to climate change, DEFRA, version 1.0 April 09 <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localgovindicators/ni188.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ Kent Agreement 2, April 2008 – March 2011, Serving Kent Together, Kent Partnership <http://www.kentpartnership.org.uk/documents/kent%20agreement%202.pdf>

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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