

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

SKYPE MEETING, 11 NOVEMBER, 2020

Present: Councillors I Taylor (Chair), I Davidson (Vice-Chair), N Baillie, R Cassie, S Dickinson, M Ford, A Kloppert and A Ross.

Apologies: Councillor S Wallace.

Officers: Head of Economic Development and Protective Services, Roads and Landscapes Services Manager, Acting Team Leader (Sustainability and Climate Change), and Sustainability and Climate Change Officer (Tara Murray), Business Services Collaboration Manager (Transportation), Environment Planner (Emma Williams), all Infrastructure Services; Team Manager (Resources and Performance), Education and Children's Services, Business Partner, Finance (Chris Smith), Principal Energy Management Engineer (Emma Donaldson), Business Services, Senior Solicitor (Fiona Stewart) and Senior Committee Officer (Niall David), both Legal and Governance.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare, in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. No interests were declared.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 148 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE OF 26 AUGUST, 2020

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 26 August, 2020, members **approved** it as a correct record.

4. PROGRESS WITH OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There was circulated a report by the Director of Business Services, which updated members on progress with actions agreed at previous meetings of the Sustainability Committee.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the current position in respect of actions arising at previous meetings;
and
- (2) **agreed** that those actions which had been completed should be removed from the outstanding actions list.

5. ENERGY TRANSITION AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY – PRESENTATION

A presentation was made to the Committee on Climate Ready Aberdeenshire (CRA): Economic and Environmental Transition, by Mr Sam Long, CRA Chair and Mr Andy Rodden, Energy Transition Programme Director, Offshore Renewables at Opportunity North East.

At the outset Mr Long highlighted the CRA Aim and Objectives. The presentation covered aspects including: sustainability and transition; actions required; private sector involvement; public awareness; and the influence of Councillors.

There followed a question and answer session.

The Committee concurred with the Chair in thanking Mr Long and Mr Rodden for an informative presentation.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION CONSULTATION

Reference was made to the Minute of Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 18 March 2020 (Item 9), when a Climate Change Declaration was agreed and a further report to Full Council was requested, following consultation with all Policy Committees and Area Committees, outlining the actions required across the Council to achieve the targets and commitments set out in the Declaration.

In this regard there was circulated a report dated 24 September 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services requesting views on how Aberdeenshire Council should work towards its Climate Change Declaration targets and commitments.

The report highlighted that the ongoing work to address the question of how to meet Aberdeenshire's Climate Change Declaration targets and commitments, of which this consultation, was part, included widespread engagement across the Council, from the Strategic Leadership Team through to Service representatives. A selection of strategic areas which had been identified for consideration were as follows: roles and responsibilities (Senior Management and Officer level); organisational capacity building; procurement; carbon budget review; planning and regional vision; emissions planning for Council estate; and finance, investments and payback periods.

Following a full discussion, the Committee **agreed** to recommend that Aberdeenshire Council's Climate Change Declaration should utilise the carbon budget as the main tool to focus the approach of Directorates for the Council to work towards the targets and commitments which it sets out, both with reference to the areas covered by this Committee and more widely as appropriate.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE DUTIES ANNUAL REPORT 2020

There was circulated a report dated 24 September 2020, by the Director of Infrastructure Services which sought approval of Aberdeenshire Council's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Annual Report for 2019-20.

Aberdeenshire Council's draft Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Annual Report 2019-20 was included as Appendix 1 and was open to be updated until submission. The report highlighted that the ongoing reduction of Council emissions was aided by reducing emissions factors. 2019 emissions factors had been used in the draft submission as the majority of the reporting period was in 2019 however, as an example, using 2020 emissions factors would see the overall reportable emissions fall still further. There were also notable areas of emissions reduction through Council initiatives, including the introduction of quarry LPG use in place of kerosene in 2019.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to approve Aberdeenshire Council's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Annual Report 2019-20 for submission to the Scottish Government (Appendix 1); subject to the submission being amended to make appropriate reference to the office based working strategy and to bullet point 3 of the 5 priorities within the submission being adjusted to reflect that a best value carbon abatement curve would be part of the work on the carbon budget; and subject to delegating approval of inclusion of any late comments to Head of Economic Development and Protective Services, following consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and opposition spokesperson; and
- (2) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to sign the declaration in Part 6e of the Annual Report.

8. EDINBURGH BIODIVERSITY DECLARATION

There was circulated a report dated 24 September 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which introduced the Edinburgh Biodiversity Declaration and requested the support of the Sustainability Committee for signing the Declaration.

The Edinburgh Declaration was intended to set out the aspirations and commitments of the Scottish Government, Edinburgh Process Partners, and the wider subnational constituency of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in delivering for nature over the coming decade. In recognition of the key role that subnational governments and Local Authorities played in delivering biodiversity protection the Declaration was open for signing by parties working at the local level.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) instruct the Chief Executive to sign the Edinburgh Declaration as detailed in Appendix 1 on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council;
- (2) instruct the Director of Infrastructure Services to provide this report as a bulletin to all Members on Ward Pages; and
- (3) instruct the Director of Infrastructure Services to invite the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP) coordinator to a future Sustainability Committee meeting to provide further information on local implementation of projects to meet Biodiversity targets.

9. RESPONSE TO TAX AFTER CORONAVIRUS CALL FOR EVIDENCE

There was circulated a report dated 24 September 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which updated the Committee with regard to the recent Aberdeenshire Council response to the tax after coronavirus inquiry from the Treasury Committee of the UK Parliament.

The UK Parliament's tax after coronavirus inquiry raised similar issues to those covered in Aberdeenshire Council's Green Recovery submission to the Scottish Parliament's Climate Change and Land Reform Committee and at the meeting of the Sustainability Committee on 26 August 2020 authority was delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to submit a response based on the principles of the Green Recovery submission, following consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of the Committee.

The Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the submission to the UK Parliament's Treasury Committee on 'tax after coronavirus', as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

10. CARBON BUDGET SIX MONTHLY UPDATES AND COVID-19 SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE LESSONS LEARNED

There was circulated a report dated 21 October 2020 by the Director of Infrastructure Services which presented an update to the Sustainability Committee on the reports that were being submitted to each Policy Committee with a Carbon Budget six monthly update, following the decision of Aberdeenshire Council at the meeting on 18 March 2020 (Item 10) when considering the Carbon Budget 2020/21.

The report explained that the Carbon Budget was set at the meeting of Aberdeenshire Council on 18 March 2020. For Aberdeenshire Council the target for carbon reduction for 2020/21 was set at 3400 tCO₂e. At the same meeting each Director was instructed to update the relevant Policy Committee on a six monthly basis on in-year progress in respect of the services for which they were responsible. This process was ongoing and appendices to the report included information from those Policy Committees which had considered this so far.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to acknowledge further actions required by Directors with regard to the Carbon Budget or from the Covid 19 sustainability and climate change lessons learned;
- (2) to note the ongoing responsibility of each Director to secure their reduction targets as set out in the Carbon Budget, and to report progress at 6 monthly to the relevant Policy Committees and to the Sustainability Committee; and
- (3) that six monthly reports be submitted to Policy Committees and then to the Sustainability Committee in approximately May and November each year; the format of the reports to be developed by the Business Services Collaboration Manager, Transportation to be based upon that used by Finance in reporting on the Revenue Budget to Policy Committees.

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