

REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE – 19 MAY 2021

CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION – RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1 Reason for Report/Summary

- 1.1 This Report presents recommended actions to enable Aberdeenshire Council to work towards the aims and targets set out in its [Climate Change Declaration](#).

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider and comment on the recommended actions (Appendix 1) to enable Aberdeenshire Council to work towards the aims and targets set out in its [Climate Change Declaration](#); and
- 2.2 Instruct the Interim Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to present the agreed recommended actions in this Report to Full Council for approval on 26 June 2021.

3 Purpose and Decision-Making Route

- 3.1 The [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) (Part 4) requires that public bodies must, in exercising their functions, act:
- In the way best calculated to contribute to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;
 - In the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programme; and
 - In a way that it considers most sustainable.
- 3.2 The [Climate Change \(Emissions Reduction Targets\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) sets new national emissions reduction targets as:
- At least 75% lower than the baseline year by 2030;
 - At least 90% lower than the baseline year by 2040; and
 - Net Zero by 2045 ('Net Zero' refers to achieving an overall balance between emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere).
- 3.3 On [18 March 2020](#) (Item 9) Aberdeenshire Council agreed a [Climate Change Declaration](#). The Declaration set new targets for the Council reducing its own emissions by 75% (2010/11 baseline) by 2030 and becoming 'Net Zero' for carbon emissions (CO₂e) by 2045, in line with national targets. The Declaration committed the Council to '*Work with others across the region to ensure that Aberdeenshire reaches Net Zero by 2045, by promoting energy transition and a circular economy*'. Also, in support of a move to a more sustainable future, the

Declaration stated further Council intentions, including the provision of community support and leadership and the promotion of biodiversity.

- 3.4 Alongside the agreement of the Declaration it was also agreed ([18 March 2020](#) (Item 9)) that a further Report be presented to Full Council by December 2020, following consultation with all Policy Committees and Area Committees, outlining the actions required to achieve the targets and intentions set out in the Declaration. Following guidance from the Recovery Reference Group on 29 October 2020 it was agreed that the Report would first be brought before Sustainability Committee before being presented to Full Council. Hence, this Report is brought before the Sustainability Committee for consideration, comment, and approval to be put before Full Council on 26 June 2021.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 Progressing towards the aims and targets set out in our Climate Change Declaration will take time, but ensuring the right foundations are in place as soon as possible could be critical to our future success or failure. Developing the basic building blocks in terms of our organisational approach and strategies for addressing emissions and wider sustainability will ensure the best chance of making wise and informed decisions in a complex, interconnected and uncertain area.
- 4.2 Consider and comment on the recommended actions to enable Aberdeenshire Council to work towards the aims and targets set out in its Climate Change Declaration that are given in **Appendix 1** and fall in the following areas:
1. Organisational
 2. Internal emissions and sustainability
 3. External emissions and sustainability
- 4.3 The recommended actions (**Appendix 1**) are based on the work of the Sustainability and Climate Change team, incorporating feedback from the four Policy Committees and six Area Committees (as requested by Full Council ([18 March 2020](#) (Item 9))), Council Services, the Strategic Leadership Team and [Climate Ready Aberdeenshire](#). **Appendix 2** provides further notes on the feedback obtained.
- 4.4 It is noted that since the Climate Change Declaration was agreed in March 2020 progress has already been made in a number of areas, as illustrated in the examples below.
- **Carbon Budget** – Directorates are taking more a more direct role in the [Carbon Budget](#) and their Directorate targets, including through identification of Directorate Carbon Budget Leads and through submitting six-monthly Carbon Budget update reports to their respective Policy Committees and to the Sustainability Committee. Additionally, Directorates are now producing Carbon Reduction Plans and Infrastructure Services are developing a Medium-Term Carbon Strategy, as agreed at Full Council ([17th March 2021](#), Item 9).

- **Climate Ready Aberdeenshire** – Aberdeenshire Council has led the establishment of the [Climate Ready Aberdeenshire](#) (CRA) cross-sector initiative which has the aim of developing a shared vision, strategy and action plan for Aberdeenshire to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impact. CRA is governed by a steering group of representatives from partner organisations and is currently working towards developing a CRA strategy.
- **Green recovery** – Sustainability and climate change considerations were incorporated into recovery work across the Council including through the Adaptive Service Board and the request of the Sustainability Committee ([26th August 2020](#), Item 5) for them to be embedded in the proposed new Council Plan and associated Service Plans. The Sustainability Committee also provided green recovery feedback to the Scottish Government ([26th August 2020](#), Item 6).
- **Strategic priorities** – ‘Climate and sustainability’ was included as an underpinning key principle in the [strategic priorities](#) in the new Council Plan for 2020-22.
- **E&CS sustainability strategy** – Education and Children’s Services are actively developing a sustainability strategy to bring further coordination to sustainability and climate change efforts across E&CS.
- **Circular economy in Services** – over a nine-month period from 2020 into 2021 Aberdeenshire Council received Zero Waste Scotland funded support through the [Circular North-east](#) project to work across Services to support the identification and development of circular economy opportunities.
- **Edinburgh Declaration** – in late 2020, following agreement from the Sustainability Committee ([11th November 2020](#), Item 8), Aberdeenshire Council became the [first local authority in Scotland](#) to sign up to the Edinburgh Biodiversity Declaration committing its support for local action on conservation of biodiversity.

4.5 With regard to the future trajectory of public body reporting to the Scottish Government in this area it should be noted that that [The Climate Change \(Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2020](#), which came into force on 9 November 2020, introduces new reporting requirements as follows:

- Where applicable, a target date for achieving zero direct emissions of greenhouse gases, or such other targets that demonstrate how the body is contributing to Scotland achieving its emissions reduction targets;
- Where applicable, any targets for reducing indirect emissions of greenhouse gases;
- How the body aligns its spending plans and use of resources to contribute to reducing emissions and delivering its emissions reduction targets;
- How the body will publish, or otherwise make available, its progress towards achieving its emissions reduction targets;
- How the body is contributing to Scotland’s Adaptation Programme (the most recent version of which was published in September 2019).

4.6 A further note of relevance is that the ‘Recommendations for Local Authorities’ section of the recent (December 2020) Climate Change Committee Report ‘[Local Authorities and the Sixth Carbon Budget](#)’ provides guidance regarding over-arching priorities for local authorities in this area. These recommendations have been considered in this report and would be a good point of reference in future developments.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This Report supports the embedding of the key principle of ‘climate and sustainability’ in the new Strategic Priorities of Aberdeenshire Council.

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	X		
Staffing	X		
Equalities	X		
Fairer Scotland Duty	X		
Town Centre First	X		
Sustainability	X		
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing	X		

5.3 At this particular stage there are limited direct impacts of approving the recommendations in this report however, there would be risks and implications if a ‘Climate Change Declaration – Recommend Actions’ Report were to be put before and approved by Full Council.

5.4 The financial implications in reaching carbon emission reduction targets are potentially significant and will need to be addressed on an individual Service and project basis and identified for the organisation as a whole so that they can inform the Council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure affordability and also across the Council’s corporate and informed approach.

5.5 Working towards the Council’s Climate Change Declaration would include a general evolution of staff roles to incorporate consideration of relevant additional issues. Additionally, there would be potential for roles to be developed to support significant projects. These changes would be assessed by Services and Directorates.

5.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not included at this time as this report is for consideration and comment ahead of potentially being brought before Full Council. The ongoing assessment of equalities impacts surrounding working towards the Climate Change Declaration is closely linked to the assessment of equalities impacts for the Carbon Budget, and the most recent Equalities Impact Assessment for the Carbon Budget is included in Appendix 5 of the Carbon Budget 2021-22 report ([Full Council, 17th March 2021](#), Item 9). The

most up-to-date Equalities Impact Assessment will be included if this Report is approved to be put before Full Council.

- 5.7 A Town Centre Impact Assessment was not completed because there are no direct material outcomes of this report that would have an impact on Town Centres. However, there is very much the potential for future Council decisions incorporating working towards the Climate Change Declaration to have an impact on town centres.
- 5.8 The decisions taken by Aberdeenshire Council with regard to its Climate Change Declaration have the potential to provide significant leadership in the region and to therefore help shape the present and future for children and young people. It is therefore incumbent on the Council to consider how its decisions affect the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the region and beyond.
- 5.9 The following specific Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level, however it is acknowledged that working towards the Climate Change Declaration has the potential to impact upon any number of areas across the Council risk portfolio.
- Risk ID ACORP010 as it relates to environmental challenges and Risk ID ACORP006 as it relates to reputation management within the Corporate Risk Register.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- Risk ID ISSR004 as it relates to Climate Change in the Directorate Risk Registers.

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this Report and their comments are incorporated within the Report. They are satisfied that the Report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section S paragraph 1.1 (a) of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to monitoring the Council's work in respect of sustainable development and climate change.

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Date 21 April 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Recommended Actions

Appendix 2 – Feedback

APPENDIX 1 – RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The recommended actions for Aberdeenshire Council to work towards the aims and targets set out in our Climate Change Declaration fall in the following key areas.

1. Organisational
2. Internal emissions and sustainability
3. External emissions and sustainability

In each of the three areas recommended actions are grouped under the following headings.

- a) Reinforcement Celebrating and reinforcing existing good work
- b) Action Taking proposals and ideas into action
- c) Exploration Exploring an area to develop proposals

1. Organisational

a) Reinforcement

- i. Continue with an approach that is genuine, well-thought through and positive, with appropriate scrutiny and consideration of what is best for Aberdeenshire and wider society.
- ii. Continue to embed sustainability and climate change considerations into all areas of Council thinking and decision-making, for example through use of the new Integrated Impact Assessment for Council reports.

b) Action

- i. Ensure earlier and ongoing engagement with the Sustainability and Climate Change Team for guidance on incorporating sustainability and climate change best practice into operations and projects.
- ii. Directorates to support the development of the Sustainability Champions programme and to provide direct input into shaping the aims and objectives of the programme to support their Directorate sustainability and climate change strategies.

c) Exploration

- i. Develop and clarify the overall governance and audit structure for sustainability and climate change across the Council.
- ii. Ensure that sustainability and climate change responsibilities are appropriately embedded into roles and responsibilities across Council.
- iii. Consider which Council policies are a priority for update to better incorporate sustainability and climate change considerations.

2. Internal Emissions and Sustainability

a) Reinforcement

APPENDIX 1 – RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- i. Continue with the progress in Directorates taking more a more direct role in the Carbon Budget and setting, managing and reporting their Directorate targets.
 - ii. Keep a focus on assessing the Scottish, UK and international developments, trends and requirements with regard to organisational emissions and sustainability management and reporting.
- b) Action
 - i. As per the agreement at Full Council ([17th March 2021](#), Item 9) Directorates to produce Carbon Reduction Plans and Infrastructure Services to develop a Medium-Term Carbon Strategy. These documents should be kept under review and updated as required.
 - ii. Directorates to incorporate other elements of sustainability into their Carbon Reduction Plans (or other relevant plans) including climate change adaptation, circular economy and biodiversity.
- c) Exploration
 - i. Use the Carbon Reduction Plans and Medium-Term Carbon Strategy (including wider sustainability considerations) for supporting decision-making and the development of action plans and integrate these into an overall governance structure.

3. External Emissions and Sustainability

- a) Reinforcement
 - i. Continue to take the view that our contribution to the sustainability and climate change agenda is far beyond just our ‘internal’ reported emissions and sustainability activity and that we have a far wider impact on local, regional and national networks, systems and progress.
- b) Action
 - i. Directorates to set up an internal working group to steer the Council’s involvement in the [Climate Ready Aberdeenshire](#) initiative.
- c) Exploration
 - i. Directorates to identify priority external areas for Council engagement in relation to our sustainability and climate change aims, to set strategy, and to ensure appropriate resourcing. Areas for consideration include: developing regional vision, public communication, planning, travel and transportation, regional energy strategy, circular economy, waste, procurement and finance.

APPENDIX 2 – FEEDBACK

Aberdeenshire Council Committee consultations

The table below notes the Policy and Area Committees to which the ‘Consultation on Climate Change Declaration recommendations’ report was presented for feedback.

Committee		Date
Policy	Business Services	7th January 2021 (Item 11)
	Communities	17th December 2020 (Item 13)
	Education and Children’s Services	3rd December 2020 (Item 16)
	Infrastructure Services	26th November 2020 (Item 12)
Area	Banff and Buchan	3rd November 2020 (Item 7)
	Buchan	10th November 2020 (Item 8)
	Formartine	17th November 2020 (Item 9)
	Garioch	10th November 2020 (Item 8)
	Kincardine and Mearns	27th October 2020 (Item 9)
	Marr	24th November 2020 (Item 9)

Climate Ready Aberdeenshire

[Climate Ready Aberdeenshire](#), the local partnership initiative developing a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy for Aberdeenshire, has provided the following feedback with regard to Aberdeenshire Council working towards its Climate Change Declaration. This feedback has been considered in the development of the recommended actions in **Appendix 1**.

- Aberdeenshire Council needs to identify work already taking place across the region with regards to climate change mitigation and adaptation by the private, public and third sector partners and to determine how to collaborate, learn from and support this work to achieve the aims of the Climate Change Declaration and to support the region.
- Climate Ready Aberdeenshire and the North East Scotland Climate Action Network (NESCAN), which brings together all climate change community groups across the region, are existing initiatives with which the Council should be aware and with whom the Council should consider how it engages.
- The Council also needs to support its decision-makers through education and awareness to make climate friendly and climate ready decisions which support the delivery of local and national commitments, including the Declaration, and which mutually benefit Aberdeenshire’s environment, economy and people. Climate Ready Aberdeenshire would be happy to contribute knowledge and expertise through its steering group member organisations.
- The Council needs to consider how it publicly reports on its progress, from both the perspectives of transparency and leadership. Climate Ready Aberdeenshire could potentially act as a check point for Council progress.
- The North East is uniquely reliant upon the energy industry and in particular the oil and gas industry that has dominated the regional economy in recent decades. Aberdeenshire Council and Climate Ready Aberdeenshire should therefore work together to support the energy transition and enable a positive change that addresses the challenges of climate change and the objectives set in the Climate Change Declaration.