

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 30TH AUGUST, 2023

Present: Councillors S Dickinson (Chair), J Gifford (Vice-Chair), P Johnston, F Joji, A Kloppert, S Payne, I Taylor and J Whyte (as substitute for Councillor G Hall).

Apologies: Councillor G Hall.

Officers: Chief Executive; Head of Service (Environment and Sustainability), Team Leader (Environment and Sustainability), Waste Manager, Sustainable Development Officer, Sustainability & Climate Change Officers (Paris Crawford and Tara Murray) all Environment and Infrastructure Services; Business Partner, Finance (Moira Beverly), Principal Solicitor (Arlene Gibbs) and Committee Officer (Nicole Chidester), all Business Services.

1. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked Members if they had any interests to declare, in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. Councillor Johnston made a transparency statement, in relation to Item 6, as a member of a fairtrade group which had no formal membership or structure but consulted and met with traders. Having applied the objective test, Councillor Johnston considered there was no interest to declare, and he would remain and participate.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

- (1) To have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality and 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 Integrated Impact Assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

3. MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF 17 MAY 2023

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 17 May, 2023, Members **agreed** to approve it as a correct record.

4. STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

A report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services was circulated detailing the items of outstanding business as at 30 August 2023.

The Environment and Sustainability Team Leader introduced the report and provided the Committee with further details on the following outstanding actions:

Item 1: The Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) report had not been published. Proposed outcomes were still being discussed. A summary of the Audit Scotland report on How the Scottish Government was set up to deliver climate change goals had been provided at Item 7 on the agenda.

Item 2: An email was sent to Members with a response from Sustainable Scotland Network about the adjustments to future emissions. With regard to emissions associated with different types of waste in residual waste streams, the Waste Team did a compositional analysis in June 2022 and would continue to consider and monitor this with the three weekly collection rollout and operation of the Energy from Waste Plant. They planned to complete another analysis in June 2024.

The Environment and Sustainability Team Leader confirmed that both Items 1 and 2 would remain on the list until the ESS report was published and the report on the Deposit Return Scheme and its potential Carbon Budget impact were considered by the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) note the current position in respect of actions arising from previous meetings; and
- (2) instruct officers to prepare a report on the theoretical carbon emissions and impact to the Carbon Budget if the Deposit Return Scheme was (1) revived, (2) mothballed, or (3) completely removed.

5. PRESENTATION - LOCAL CLIMATE IMPACT PROFILE

A presentation was made to the Committee on the Local Climate Impact Profile (LCIP) covering 2019-2022, by Tara Murray, Sustainability and Climate Change Officer. Members were reminded that the recommendations contained in the report were draft recommendations and had not been formally approved.

The presentation began by briefly reviewing how climates, including Scotland's, were changing, which resulted in more extreme weather events and changes in temperatures. While efforts were ongoing to reduce the carbon footprint, Aberdeenshire Council was also learning to adapt and prepare for these weather events. LCLIPs, which were developed by the UK Climate Impacts Programme, assisted local authorities and organisations to assess their exposure and vulnerability to past weather events, as a step towards preparing for future risks. They raised awareness, identified future actions, and provided recommendations for improving preparedness.

The presentation briefly reviewed significant events during 2019-2022 and their impact on the Council, including extreme weather events, the United Kingdom withdrawing from the European Union, Covid-19, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The presentation went on to review the methodology and where data was collected to create the LCLIP. A comparison of the extreme weather events from LCLIP 2011-2018 to LCLIP 2019-2022 was provided, as well as further details of the extreme weather events in the most recent LCLIP.

The Impact on Council Services included damage, disruption to and increased demand for services; financial costs; risk to employees and public health and wellbeing; and an increase in engagement and support to communities. All Council Directorates and Services were impacted. The draft recommendations included developing a training programme; creating a management plan or model; developing a cost code and a central fund for climate change costs; developing an employee redeployment and volunteer programme; and developing a communication and engagement plan for communities. The presentation outlined next steps and concluded with an emphasis that adaptation was necessary while addressing climate change.

After the presentation, the Chair thanked the presenter and opened it up to a question and answer session, during which Members focussed on: the governance route for the recommendations to be approved; progress towards centralising cost codes and funding; clarity if new funds were required or would simply be reallocated; if new cost codes would be allocated alongside current coding; if those who were interviewed had also completed the survey, and if survey information matched interview answers.

Thereafter, the Committee concurred with the Chair in thanking Ms Murray for an excellent presentation and emphasised the importance of adaptation while addressing climate change.

6. ABERDEENSHIRE FAIRTRADE ZONE RENEWAL

There was circulated a report dated 17 August 2023, by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, that requested Aberdeenshire Council's continued commitment to Fairtrade and provided a summary of the online Fairtrade Zone renewal application which was currently under development by the Aberdeenshire Fairtrade Steering Group and was due on 1 October 2023.

Aberdeenshire Council became the 17th Fairtrade Zone in 2013. The last renewal was 19 February 2020. Renewals typically occurred every two years but there was a delay due to the new online application template. Aberdeenshire Council's current certification had been extended to October 2023.

Members comments focussed on the value of participating, particularly with access to forums and being able to share information and meet like-minded groups. Members were complimentary that local production was sitting alongside fairtrade and of the variety of activities the Fairtrade group had been and planned to be involved with.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) commit Aberdeenshire Council to its continued support of Fairtrade Zone status in Aberdeenshire; and
- (2) approve the draft Fairtrade Zone Application, attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

7. HOW THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT IS SET UP TO DELIVER CLIMATE CHANGE GOALS - AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT

There was circulated a report dated 17 August 2023, by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, that contained a summary of the Audit Scotland report on How the Scottish Government is set up to deliver climate change goals. The report focussed on how effective the Scottish Government's climate change governance and risk management arrangements were in supporting the delivery of Scotland's national net zero targets and climate change adaptation outcomes

Aberdeenshire's Sustainability and Climate Change Teams intended to utilise the recommendations within the Audit Scotland report for future work around the Carbon Budget and Route Map to 2030.

Following the introduction of the report Members shared comments and questions focused on how the report lacked details on improving efficiencies, workforce plans, and behavioural changes; queried the timeline for the Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) investigation (outlined in 3.4 and 3.4.1); scope 3 emissions and the additional resources that would be required; the need to develop a holistic approach to climate change goals; what barriers existed to achieving these goals; and the emerging role of ESS to ensure adherence to legislation

Members highlighted a few concerns including that the report did not discuss financing; and that climate change continued to compete with other policy priorities. Members reinforced the need for new and sustainable funding, and the importance of mitigation, adaptation, and reviewing any impacts on climate change and sustainability outlined within Integrated Impact Assessments associated with reports.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) approve the Audit Scotland report on How the Scottish Government is set up to deliver climate change goals, a summary of which was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (2) note the upcoming investigation being finalised by Environmental Standards Scotland.

8. CARBON BUDGET 2023-2024 PROGRESS UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 9 March 2022 (Item 5), when the Carbon Budget 2023-2024 was agreed, there was circulated a report dated 17 August 2023, by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, that provided an update on progress to date towards the actions listed in the Carbon Budget. There was a risk that the target was unlikely to be met. Officers explained the difference between targets marked as 'unknown' and 'to be determined (TBD)', with unknowns being projects where data was not available to calculate savings but were important to include; whereas TBDs were calculable, but information had not been provided.

Members clarified that the information contained in the appendices were Scope One Emissions, meaning the data only captured Aberdeenshire Council emissions and not emissions from the whole of Aberdeenshire.

The discussion included questions about the use of Solar photovoltaic (PV) power generation, particularly on academy grounds; expressions of disappointment at the number of TBDs contained within the report and an expectation that more support would be provided. Questions were raised about the anticipated saving for the High Specification Bus Shelters; additional information about the waste strategy in schools, particularly around plastics; composting and the Council's Waste Strategy, including a discussion on communication and behavioural changes; the Live Life Aberdeenshire Heating Review; and an explanation on why emissions had increased with regard to electricity usage. Members again emphasised their responsibility to scrutinise reports from a sustainability perspective in policy committees, when reviewing Integrated Impact Assessments, and when reviewing procurement requests.

The Chief Executive indicated that he would assist officers in reducing the number of TBDs contained within the Carbon Budget 2023-2024.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the Carbon Budget 2023-2024 six-monthly, update as attached in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (2) note the ongoing responsibility of each Director to secure their reduction targets as set out in the Carbon Budget, and to report progress at six-monthly intervals to the relevant Policy Committees and to the Sustainability Committee.

9. ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ROUTE MAP TO 2030 AND BEYOND PROGRESS UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 29 September 2022 (Item 14), when the Aberdeenshire Council Route Map to 2030 and Beyond was approved, there was circulated a report dated 17 August 2023, by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, that provided an update on the progress to date of the Aberdeenshire Council Route Map to 2030 and beyond. The report set out the 11 recommendations which came out of a risk analysis and contained an update on progress toward the Accounts Commission's five recommendations.

Officers highlighted that the Route Map Steering Group was developing SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-based) goals for these 11 recommendations.

Members questions and comments focussed on how to address, analyse, and quantify the skills gap; how to prioritise skills growth in regions which would benefit the most from future technologies; and expressions of support for implementing measurable targets. Members thanked the Chief Executive for his support of the sustainability agenda and again emphasised the need for Members to champion the route map during Policy Committee meetings, while reviewing Integrated Impact Assessments, and through procurement exercises.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge Aberdeenshire Council's progress towards addressing the recommendations, as set out in the Route Map to 2030 and Beyond (Appendix 1 to the report); and

- (2) acknowledge Aberdeenshire Council's progress towards addressing the recommendations as set out in the Accounts Commission's five recommendations for Councils, as detailed in Appendix 5 to the report.

Draft