

REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE – 30 NOVEMBER 2022

SCOTLAND'S COUNCILS' APPROACH TO ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT

1 Executive Summary/Recommendations

1.1 This report contains a summary of the Audit Scotland report ([Scotland's Councils' Approach to Addressing Climate Change](#)) and how Aberdeenshire Council is addressing the recommendations which were published on 8 September 2022. It is being brought to the Sustainability Committee for consideration and comment. The report also highlights additional audits currently underway by Audit Scotland and Environmental Standards Scotland.

1.2 The Committee is recommended to:

1.2.1 Consider and comment on Aberdeenshire Council's progress towards addressing the recommendations as set out by the Accounts Commission in the Audit Scotland report (Appendix 1); and

1.2.2 Note the upcoming audits and investigations underway by Audit Scotland and Environmental Standards Scotland.

2 Decision-Making Route

2.1 On 8 September 2022 the Accounts Commission report on Scotland's Councils' approach to addressing climate change was published (<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/scotlands-councils-approach-to-addressing-climate-change>). The report highlights that Councils have a critical role in helping Scotland achieve its national climate change goals, in particular reducing CO2 emissions, adapting, transforming services and therefore climate change must be central and integral to all Council activity. The briefing covered climate change ambitions and the approaches of Councils to date and highlighted some of the work from individual Councils, including case studies on areas considered good practice.

2.2 At the Sustainability Committee on 21 September 2022 it was requested that the Audit Scotland report be added to the business of this November Committee meeting.

3 Discussion

3.1 The report is broken down by the following main topics and provides information on the challenges and opportunities as well as some case studies for examples under the following points:

- Councils have a critical role in meeting national climate change targets
- Councils have a duty to act and an important leadership role

- Councils need to be clear about what is included in emissions targets
- Councils need to be clear about how they are dealing with residual emissions
- Councils need up-to-date delivery plans for emissions reduction that are transparent about the challenges
- Councils need to be clear about the level of risk posed by climate change and transparent about the extent to which current plans will minimise impacts
- Councils need to build on and increase collaboration with partners and communities
- Councils need to put climate change at the heart of decision-making

3.2 The report puts together 5 recommendations for successfully addressing climate change and the enormous challenge, which it recognises that no Council can tackle in isolation. The report highlights that action will need to involve collaboration across all parts of government and society to bring about the required transformational change. It also states that this will be an ongoing area of interest for the Accounts Commission through its annual audit, Best Value and performance audit work.

3.3 The Accounts Commission would like Councils to consider 5 key recommendations. **Appendix 1** contains a table of these recommendations and the suggested actions under each of these as listed in the report. Aberdeenshire Council is already very well placed to demonstrate delivery on these recommendations. Added to the table in **Appendix 1** are the current and future considerations on how the Council is actioning the delivery of them.

3.4 There are currently also 2 other audits/investigations underway. Audit Scotland published a flyer in September 2022 for the performance audit that they are carrying out on the Scottish Government's governance and risk management arrangements for driving delivery of key climate change commitments. The flyer which provides further information on the audit, including its scope can be found here: <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/climate-change-audit-scope>.

3.5 Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) is also currently undertaking an investigation into 'the systems in place to support local authorities in the delivery of climate change targets'. ESS is a relatively new organisation, with a focus on 'monitoring the effectiveness of environmental law in Scotland, and public authorities' compliance with it'. ESS approached Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) to help arrange a consultation meeting with SSN local authority members, which took place on the 9 November 2022. The meeting was an important opportunity to inform ESS's understanding of how the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties are enacted and to share views on the Scottish Government's role in supporting effective implementation. The key areas discussed were: Support and resources available for climate delivery; Reporting climate activity; and Development of climate change plans. More information

on this investigation can be found here:

<https://www.environmentalstandards.scot/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ESS-Investigations-Climate-change-website-information-June22.pdf>

4 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

4.1 This Report helps deliver all of the Council’s Strategic Priorities under the three Pillars by embedding the key principle of ‘climate and sustainability’ across Aberdeenshire Council.

Pillar	Priority
Our People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure • Resilient Communities
Our Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy & Enterprise • Estate Modernisation

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

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

4.3 There are no direct staffing or financial implications arising from this performance monitoring report.

4.4 The screening section as part of Stage One of the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process has not identified the requirement for any further detailed assessments to be undertaken. An IIA is not required as this report is providing a summary of an external report and information on future external audits and investigations being brought to the Committee for consideration and comment only.

4.5 The following Risks in the Corporate Risk Register have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- Risk ID ACORP010 as it relates to environmental challenges; and
- Risk ID ACORP006 as it relates to reputation management

The following Risk in the Directorate Risk Registers has been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:

- Risk ID ISSR010 as it relates to Climate Change.

4.5.1 Mitigation of these risks could be addressed by sufficient communication and engagement on the progress Aberdeenshire Council is making with regards to climate change mitigation and adaptation both internally and externally. This includes being transparent on the challenges of addressing climate change as well as the opportunities for the organisation and region.

5 Scheme of Governance

5.1 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.

5.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section R paragraph 1.1 (a) of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to reviewing and monitoring the Council's work in respect of sustainable development and climate change.

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Date: 18 November 2022

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - The Accounts Commission's 5 Recommendations for Councils to Consider