

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

HYBRID MEETING, 17 MAY 2023

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

Apologies: Councillor F Joji.

Officers: Head of Service (Environment and Sustainability), Team Leader (Environment and Sustainability), all Environment and Infrastructure Services; Team Leader (Youth and Communities), Education and Children's Services; Engineering Services Manager (Property & Facilities), Principal Solicitor (Arlene Gibbs) and Committee Officer (Nicole Chidester), all Business Services.

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 Integrated Impact Assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF 23 FEBRUARY 2023

On consideration of the circulated Minute of the Meeting of the Committee of 23 February 2023, Members **agreed** to approve it as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS

There was circulated a report by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, which updated Members on the progress with actions agreed at previous meetings of the Committee held since 21 September 2022.

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

Item 1 – A report with the full results of the Reuse Feasibility Study would come to the Committee 30 August 2023 as part of a Route Map update.

Item 2 – It was **noted** that the date of publication of the 'How the Scottish Government is set up to deliver climate change goals' should have been listed as 20 April 2023.

The Environment and Sustainability Team Leader confirmed that (1) Items 1, 3 and 4 were complete and, if agreed, could be removed from the list and that Item 2 would remain on the list until the Environmental Standards Scotland report was published and a link was shared. Members expressed a desire to further discuss the audits/investigations listed under item 2.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the current position in respect of actions arising from previous meetings;
- (2) that those actions which had been completed should be removed from the outstanding actions list; and
- (3) to instruct officers to prepare a report updating members on Audit Scotland's 'How the Scottish Government is set up to deliver climate change goals' and results from 'The Environmental Standards Scotland' report, once the latter was published.

5. PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SCHOOLS – CLIMATE CHALLENGE (PRESENTATION)

A presentation was made to the Committee on the recent Participatory Budgeting exercises in schools focused on climate change and carbon reduction, by Madelene MacSween, Team Leader Youth and Communities.

Members were informed that of 36 schools which submitted projects over two different rounds, 9 Academy projects and 18 primary school projects were successful. Projects for 2022/23 varied in focus including: wildlife and biodiversity, food growing, learning resources, accessing environment for education, improving the school environment, technology focused, and upcycling/reusing/recycling.

The end life of this project would be the end of the school year, rather than the fiscal year which enabled pupils to see their projects through. Early anecdotal feedback from successful projects was shared, as well as a detailed list of which schools had gained funding. This participatory budgeting project aimed to help children learn about climate change and carbon reduction, while empowering them to have the resources to take positive action. The process was currently being reviewed, including timescales, with an aim to involve more young people in 2023/24. The presentation concluded with a review of the next steps for the project.

After the presentation, the Chair emphasised the importance of establishing legacy with these projects. She opened it up to a question and answer session during which Members praised the wide involvement and varied nature of each project. Members queried those schools who were not successful and the likelihood of them reapplying; if structured feedback would be sought from young people; sought clarity on the voting and selection process; if all the funding had been allocated; and which age groups were engaged and most involved with these projects. Members praised the participatory budgeting project which allowed young people to see how budgets work, learn the democratic process, and gain important skills for the future, including resilience, awareness of climate change, and how to be an agent for change. Members expressed their support for this project to continue.

Thereafter, the Committee concurred with the Chair in thanking Ms MacSween for an excellent presentation and commended the young people for the scope, range, and sophistication of their projects and hoped for their projects to leave a legacy.

6. CARBON BUDGET 2022/2023 FINAL UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 9 March 2022 (Item 7), where the Carbon Budget for 2022/2023 was agreed, there was circulated a report dated 4 May 2023, by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, which presented the final update on actions listed in the Carbon Budget 2022/2023. The report indicated that the Carbon Budget for 2022/23 was unlikely to be reached due to challenges which delayed projects from starting at the anticipated time. However, many of those projects had now been moved into 2023/24 for actioning or were revised to become more cost effective.

Members were informed that the report only captured projects, other factors that could have reduced emissions may not be captured. Emission Factors would be published in June 2023, then Sustainable Scotland Network would update the reporting spreadsheets, following which Reporting Leads for each of the public sector bodies would be notified. Data from Services would then be gathered for a report to Committee in November 2023.

Members raised questions and comments regarding how the targets were calculated and reasons for missing targets; further details on the role of Sustainability Champions; if emission figures took into account the recent IPCC report; the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS); setting realistic targets with built-in flexibility; concerns with delays due to partnership working; resource and funding pressures; progress with LED changeover; The Energy Sparks Project and improved recycling and composting in schools.

Thereafter the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the final Carbon Budget 2022/2023 six-monthly update as attached in Appendix 2.
- (2) instruct officers to contact Sustainable Scotland Network to seek a response/ identify the appropriate department within Scottish Government to approach, regarding future adjustments to emission figures given the

recent IPCC report, including timetables for adjustments and discussions with local authorities. Officers to then update the Committee with the response provided;

- (3) instruct officers to include carbon emissions data associated with the Council's residual waste that goes to the Energy for Waste Plant in the 6-monthly Carbon Budget updates to Policy Committees, if the data was available; and
- (4) instruct officers to include information on the impact of, including tonnage figures, the Deposit Return Scheme on waste collection streams within future reports to the Infrastructure Services Committee.

7. THE DRAFT ENERGY STRATEGY AND JUST TRANSITION PLAN CONSULTATION

There was circulated a report dated 5 May 2023, by the Director of Environment and Infrastructure Services, that presented the Aberdeenshire Council response – with comments from officers across different key Services, including Economic Development, Planning, and Environment and Infrastructure Services, as well as from some Members – to the 'Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan – delivering a fair and secure zero carbon energy system for Scotland' consultation which opened on 10 January 2023 and closed on 9 May 2023.

Members were informed that some officers also attended a workshop provided by the Scottish Government where they heard presentations and attended breakout discussions. The Council's response was submitted on 5 May 2023.

Members made comments on the resource intensive nature of responding to this consultation and thanked officers for their work. Further comments and questions focussed on the importance of engaging with the Third Sector and community bodies who were positioned to communicate effectively with communities about available renewable technology resources, the importance of engaging with North East Climate Action Network (NESCOAN), the scope for community based projects or schemes, what incentives were available for landlords, wind turbines and challenges with grid capacity/public perception, and that food security should reflect the entire food supply chain, including processing.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to acknowledge the Aberdeenshire Council submission on the consultation of the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan which was submitted under delegated powers and following internal consultation.