

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 14 NOVEMBER, 2018

Present: Councillors C Pike (Chair), N Baillie, I Davidson, R Cassie, S Dickinson, M Ford, A Kloppert and S Wallace.

Apologies: Councillor I Taylor.

Officers: Head of Economic Development and Protective Services; Team Leader, Sustainability and Climate Change; Principal Solicitor, Governance; Sustainable Development (Climate Change) Officer; and Committee Officer (J McRobbie).

In attendance: Tim Gordon-Roberts, Forestry Commission Regulations and Development Manager; and Ms Arina Nagy-Vizitiu, Public Affairs, The Woodlands Trust.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair and Vice-Chair referred to connections with Items 4 (Forestry Commission Presentation) and 5 (Woodlands Trust Presentation) that as Member of the Woodlands Trust, and a former employee of the Forestry Commission respectively). Having applied the objective test, both Councillors Pike and Davidson considered the interest to be remote and insignificant and 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

The "protected characteristics" under the legislation are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation; and (in relation to point (i) above

3. OF MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF 12 SEPTEMBER 2018

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record the Minute of Meeting of 18 September, 2018.

4. TREE DISEASES – PRESENTATION BY FORESTRY COMMISSION REGULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 28 February, 2018 (Item 5), The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Mr Tim Gordon-Roberts, the Forestry Commission, to the meeting which thereafter received a presentation on tree diseases.

Mr Gordon-Roberts spoke of the main diseases and parasite attacks which were currently impacting on trees in North East Scotland, highlighting those which had not yet been detected locally but on which there was a watching brief, and additional preventive measures which were in place, or could be, implemented if required. He indicated where joint working was needed to address the issues faced and commended the use of aerial surveying in the detection of outbreaks and attacks. Members heard of the statutory processes of enforcement of remedial work which generally directed the felling of 200m of the infected zone, with 83 such notices issued in 2018 in north east Scotland so far. Mr Gordon-Roberts also detailed the licence conditions which were in place for the movement of timber and the import measures which were also in force.

There was discussion of the “cordon sanitaire” requirements, post detection; the impact such requirements could have on the woodscape, especially if the plantations focused on single tree species which were all attacked; the need to support tree species to become more resilient through managed breeding programmes, in a time when stressed trees were more susceptible to other pathogens; the “keep it clean” campaign, advocating awareness of paws, boots, wheels and cars as a method of spreading spore borne diseases between areas; and ongoing work with other forestry landowners to ensure the best management of their estates to mitigate the risk of disease.

The Committee **agreed:-**

1. to note the updates provided;
2. to commend the good work on which the Forestry Commission was leading;
3. that officers provide, via Ward Pages, additional information on the impact of Dutch Elm and Wych Elm disease in northeast Scotland; and
4. to thank Mr Gordon-Roberts for an informative and interesting presentation.

5. WOODLAND TRUST RESOURCES – PRESENTATION BY WOODLAND TRUST PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 28 February, 2018 (Item 5), the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, welcomed Ms Arina Nagy-Vizitiu, of the Woodlands Trust, to the meeting which thereafter heard of the ongoing work of the Woodland Trust in Scotland, and how its resources might be available to various school and community groups in Aberdeenshire.

Ms Nagy-Vizitu spoke of the challenges for the Trust, including climate change and sustainability, and work to mitigate and adapt from the impacts, including the creation of more resilient bio-systems; the removal of non-native species, and the work of the Trust’s outreach team in providing support in the form of reports and surveys free of charge, tailored to the land-use type, with most of the current work in the Cairngorms National Park Area, with sites from Huntly and Dunecht also being supported. Funding was sometimes available for up to 60% of costs for planting schemes, which might also be eligible to apply for Forestry Commission grants. The Trust’s biggest challenge was in land use and encouraging changes, such as the combination of the forest in farming. It was reported that the Scottish Government were very supportive of the Trust’s work and ambitious for its success, and also that Councils could be provided with packs for their schools. The Trust’s Charter for Trees, Woods and People was a key document which echoed to a great extent the Council’s own vision for woodland as detailed in the Aberdeenshire Forestry Strategy.

There was discussion of the potential clash of single tree species planting with the Forestry Commission's recommended diversification approach; on-going research being undertaken to identify the most effective preventative options; the year-round application process through which Aberdeenshire Schools and communities could seek planting resources, with the actual distribution of supplies channelled to appropriate planting seasons; the better embedding in the education curriculum of works to ensure better understanding and connections between people and the natural world which we inhabit.

The Committee **agreed:-**

1. to note the updates provided;
2. to commend the good work of the Woodlands Trust;
3. that additional information be provided, via Ward Pages, on single species planting in terms of the Forestry Commission's stance on diversification as a barrier to spread; and
4. to thank Ms Nagy-Vizitu for an interesting and informative presentation.

6. CARBON BUDGET 2019/20

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 12 September, 2018, (Item 6) there had been circulated a report dated 31 October, 2018 by the Director of Infrastructure Services requesting Members' consideration of a proposed Carbon Budget for 2019/20.

Having heard further from the Team Leader, Sustainability and Climate Change, the Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note additional checks were to be undertaken to be assured that the Quarry and Energy submissions tallied, but acknowledge that this would not impact negatively on the direction of trend reported;
- (2) to approve the revised report style as appropriate and informative to complement the Revenue Budget report, which would be considered by Council in February, 2019;
- (3) to commend staff on their work undertaken in collating the report's content across services and presenting it in an accessible format.

7. PUBLIC SECTOR CLIMATE CHANGE DUTIES REPORTING SUBMISSION 2017/18

There had been circulated a report dated 31 October, 2018 by the Director of Infrastructure Services requesting Members' consideration of the Council's completed Climate Change Duties submission for the 2017/18 reporting year. After discussion, the Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to approve the Council's completed submission for 2017/18 reporting year, as detailed in the Appendix to the report, for submission to the Sustainable Scotland Network on behalf of the Scottish Government, subject to additional narrative in Section 3, highlighting the Council's positive journey in tracking and reporting climate change issues of recent years;

- (2) that officers consider appropriate public exposure of the submission, potentially as a summary document;
- (3) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to sign the declaration at Part 6 of the submission; and
- (4) that officers consider and provide additional information, via Ward Pages, on ongoing work across Aberdeenshire to develop community resilience, in terms of flooding, with third parties.

8. RESOURCES AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY COMMITMENT

There had been circulated a report dated 31 October, 2018 by the Director of Infrastructure Services, requesting Members' consideration of the potential development of a Council-wide commitment to adopting a resources and circular economy for the operation of Council business.

Having heard further from the Team Leader, Sustainability and Climate Change that the consideration had been prompted by recent public focus on single use plastics, which had triggered a far wider discussion by officers, there was discussion of what could potentially be achieved within Aberdeenshire, how the Council might work as an exemplar to promote such themes in other sectors; and the Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to approve for their interest and further development, the exploration of a Resources and Circular Economy Commitment, along the lines appended to the report; and
- (2) that the Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to develop the Commitment further, reflecting feedback provided with additional support from Procurement service, and report further to the next Sustainability Committee meeting on 27 February, 2019.

9. LOCAL HEAT AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY (LHEES) UPDATE – ORAL UPDATE BY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CLIMATE CHANGE) OFFICER

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 28 February, 2018 (Item 8), the Committee heard from the Sustainable Development (Climate Change) Officer of progress in the continuing phases of the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) across Scotland. Having noted that, whilst phase 1 of the pilot had concentrated on energy efficiency in buildings in communities, phase 2 was to focus on different use sectors.

The Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note that Aberdeenshire Council had submitted a phase 2 funding bid for pilot work with Small to Medium Sized Businesses (SMEs); and
- (2) that officers provide future updates on the pilot as appropriate.