

## REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD 09 DECEMBER 2020

### CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION CONSULTATION

#### 1 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Integration Joint Board (IJB):

- 1.1 Consider Aberdeenshire Council's Climate Change Declaration and provide its views on how the Council should work towards the targets and commitments which it sets out, both with reference to the area covered by this Board and more widely as appropriate.

#### 2 Directions

- 2.1 No direction requires to be issued to Aberdeenshire Council or NHS Grampian as a result of this report.

#### 3 Risk

- 3.1 The following risks from the IJB Risk Register are deemed relevant to this report.

ID 1591	Workforce capacity, recruitment, development & staff empowerment (3)
ID 1989	Business Continuity arrangements are fully integrated and harmonise with other control measures (4)
ID 1590	Risk of not adequately involving and engaging with our patients/clients, the public, staff and partners (5)
ID 2296	Working effectively with Partner organisations (6)

#### 4 Background

- 4.1 Aberdeenshire Council's Climate Change Declaration sets new targets of the Council reducing its own emissions by 75% (2010/11 baseline) by 2030 and becoming 'Net Zero' for carbon equivalent emissions by 2045, as well as the target to 'work with others across the region to ensure that Aberdeenshire reaches Net Zero by 2045'. The Declaration also reinforces existing commitments to community empowerment and fairness, promoting biodiversity, the circular economy and energy transition.

4.2 Aberdeenshire Council's overall response to and management of its sustainability and climate change duties and commitments is currently based around a number of areas, including the following:

- **Policies and commitments** – for example, the Environmental and Climate Change Policy (2017) and Resources and Circular Economy Commitment (2019).
- **Initiatives, strategies and processes** – for example Climate Ready Aberdeenshire, the Pollinator Action Plan 2019 to 2021 and Carbon Budget (details below).
- **Member oversight** – the Sustainability Committee meets quarterly to oversee the Council's work and ensure duty compliance, with items considered by other Policy Committees, including Full Council, as required.
- **Officer support** – the Sustainability and Climate Change Team provide coordination, expertise and guidance.

A key area for ongoing development is bringing together these various strands under a clear governance and responsibility structure and embedding these into coordinated processes across the Council.

- 4.3 The Council's pioneering Carbon Budget has potential to be a key process in the Council working reducing its own emissions by 75% (2010/11 baseline) by 2030 and becoming 'Net Zero' for carbon equivalent emissions by 2045. The Carbon Budget was established in the 2017-18 financial year with the aim of ensuring that an ongoing reduction in the Council's own emissions was managed and monitored alongside financial budgets.
- 4.4 The Carbon Budget has been successful in raising the engagement in and the profile and planning of emissions reduction across the Council and work is ongoing to embed Carbon Budget responsibilities at appropriate levels across the Council. Carbon Budget emissions reductions have so far been broadly on track, however this has been helped to a large extent by the reducing emissions factor for grid electricity. It should also be noted that the Carbon Budget, although useful, is only a simplified picture of Council emissions and does not, for example, cover embodied and external emissions from resources, procurement and contractors. These emissions are likely to be the greatest share of the Council's emissions and highlights the importance of being part of the transition to a more circular economy.
- 4.5 To ensure that the Carbon Budget process is fit for purpose to drive progress towards the Council's new emissions reduction targets in the Climate Change Declaration appropriate responsibilities will need to be assigned for its oversight and enactment. The range of emissions which it covers, how it measures them and the Council's definition of 'net zero' will all need to be agreed. Additionally, the limitations of the Council's influence and responsibility within a wider political and economic landscape will need to be taken into account.

- 4.6 The aim for Aberdeenshire Council to ‘work with others across the region to ensure that Aberdeenshire reaches Net Zero by 2045’ will require a step-up in regional engagement and emissions planning with relevant stakeholders. It will also require contribution to the development of coordinated regional vision with regard to energy generation and use, planning and land management, circular economy, infrastructure, transport and carbon offsetting among others. Nestrans and Climate Ready Aberdeenshire are examples of initiatives where Aberdeenshire Council is already engaged in contributing to regional vision in areas with strong links to sustainability and climate change.
- 4.7 It is acknowledged that we are still at a relatively early stage in a complex and uncertain journey of working towards various emissions reduction targets and other sustainability duties. It is therefore proposed as best at this time to focus on the opportunities to further embed the targets and commitments of our Climate Change Declaration into our Council roles and responsibilities, processes and existing frameworks, also considering the issue of developing the required capacity and commitment. In other words, it is recommended that we now focus on the strategic aspect of ‘how’ we are going to address this challenge, while not ignoring the ongoing the ‘what’ of specific projects and opportunities.
- 4.8 The ongoing work to address the question of how to meet our Climate Change Declaration targets and commitments – of which this consultation is part – includes widespread engagement across the Council, from the Strategic Leadership Team through to Service representatives. A selection of strategic areas which have been identified for consideration so far are as follows:
- Roles and responsibilities (Senior Management and Officer level)
  - Organisational capacity building
  - Procurement
  - Carbon Budget review
  - Planning and regional vision
  - Emissions planning for Council estate
  - Finance, investments and payback periods
- 4.9 Success in addressing the targets and commitments in Aberdeenshire Council’s Climate Change Declaration and maximising the potential benefits on offer will not come quickly or easily. Achievement relies on the targets, commitments and associated thinking and skills being deeply embedded across the whole organisation and wider region. Our success in years and decades to come depend on the strategic foundations built here and now.

## 5 Summary

- 5.1 On 18 March 2020 Aberdeenshire Council (Item 9) agreed a Climate Change Declaration and requested a further report to Full Council, following consultation with all Policy Committees and Area Committees, outlining the

actions required across the Council to achieve the targets and commitments set out in the Declaration.

- 5.2 This report is by way consultation inviting the views of the Board on how Aberdeenshire Council should work towards its Climate Change Declaration targets and commitments, both with reference to the area covered by this Board and more widely as appropriate.
- 5.3 Member leadership in this complex, interlinked and evolving agenda is key and therefore the feedback of the Board and its ongoing engagement, growing understanding of related issues and support is much needed and appreciated.
- 5.4 The Chief Officer, along with the Chief Finance Officer and the Legal Monitoring Officers within Business Services of the Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated within the report.

## **6 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct implications of providing this feedback. The impacts of any proposals arising from this feedback will be assessed as required including any requirement for the completion of Equality Impact Assessments.

***Stephen Archer***  
**Director of Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by Joel Evans, Team Leader Sustainability and Climate Change (Acting)  
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