

## REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 17 DECEMBER 2020

### CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION CONSULTATION

#### 1 Reason for Report/Summary

- 1.1 This report is by way of a requested consultation with the Committee regarding its views on how Aberdeenshire Council should work towards its [Climate Change Declaration](#) targets and commitments. Feedback will be incorporated into a requested report to Full Council which is planned for May 2021.

#### 2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Consider Aberdeenshire Council's [Climate Change Declaration](#) and provide comments for Full Council at its meeting in May, 2021 on how to work towards the Declaration's targets and commitments with reference to the area covered by this Committee.**

#### 3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 This report is by way of the requested consultation inviting the views of the Committee on how Aberdeenshire Council should work towards its Climate Change Declaration targets and commitments, both with reference to the area covered by this Committee and more widely as appropriate.
- 3.3 Member leadership in this complex, interlinked and evolving agenda is key and therefore the feedback of the Committee and its ongoing engagement, growing understanding of related issues and support is much needed and appreciated.

#### 4 Discussion

- 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 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report supports the embedding of the key principle of ‘climate and sustainability’ in the new Strategic Priorities of Aberdeenshire Council.

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

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X

Equalities			X
Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability	X		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X

- 5.3 There are no direct implications of providing this feedback. The impacts of any proposals arising from this feedback will be assessed as required.
- 5.4 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as there are no direct implications of providing this feedback. The requirement for Equality Impact Assessments will be assessed as required with regard to proposals that emerge from feedback given.
- 5.5 A Town Centre Impact Assessment is not required as there are no direct implications of providing this feedback. The requirement for Town Centre Impact Assessments will be assessed as required with regard to proposals that emerge from feedback given.
- 5.6 The following Risks 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 within the Corporate Risk Register.
- The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level:
- Risk ID ISSR004 as it relates to Climate Change in the Directorate Risk Registers.

## 6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 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 and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section D.1.1a-g of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to Communities Committee.

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**Director of Infrastructure Services**

Report prepared by Joel Evans, Team Leader Sustainability and Climate Change (Acting)  
4 December 2020

**List of Appendices -None**