



REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2020 - 2030

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT & FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks the Council to agree the draft Climate Change Strategy for 2020-2030 for consultation.
- 1.2 The report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section II (13) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the approval of Council Reports and Strategies of a corporate nature including Local Development and Housing Plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- i) **consider and agree the draft Climate Change Strategy 2020 -2030 in Appendix 1 for public consultation and engagement from 3 September to 30 October 2020;**
- ii) **notes the draft Action Plan in Appendix 2 which gives an early indication of the actions currently proposed to implement the strategy, noting that these require further development and to be reviewed in light of the consultation feedback on the strategy itself; and**
- iii) **notes that a final Strategy and Action Plan will be presented to Council on 20 January 2021.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Climate Change is defined as a change in global or regional climate patterns. This is largely attributed to an increase of atmospheric carbon dioxide that is produced by the use of fossil fuels. Carbon dioxide, together with other greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide stop heat escaping

from the Earth into space which in turn can lead to global warming and climate change.

3.2 Climate change is the biggest challenge that we face in our lifetime and for future generations. There is clear scientific evidence that change is accelerating quicker than expected and action is needed now to combat the direct and current impact and to agree a pathway for a sustainable future.

3.3 The potential impact for Moray arising from climate change includes:

- Changes in rainfall patterns – Moray has suffered serious flooding in recent years;
- An increase in sea levels – Coastal flooding continues to have a negative impact for coastal communities; and
- Pollution from burning fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) – this is a known contributory factor for asthma and other respiratory diseases.

3.4 On 27 June 2019, the Council recognised that climate change is an ecological emergency and that it needed to take action to protect Moray, the country and the world. It agreed to form a Climate Change Group to help direct, develop and scrutinise the Council's approach to Climate Change with the aim of being carbon neutral by 2030 (Paragraph 6 of the Minute refers).

3.5 Since June 2019, members of the Climate Change Group (which has included cross-party member representation) have worked together to develop a draft Climate Change Strategy. The strategy has taken account of the environmental, economic and social aspects of climate change and sustainability and also provides a strategic direction for the Council to follow over the next 10 years.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2019–2024 states that the Council will work to protect and enhance our environment by creating a more resilient and sustainable future. The draft Climate Change Strategy (**APPENDIX 1**) supports these aims and objectives by stating its future vision of the Council as:

“A resource efficient, carbon neutral council that works with partners to mitigate the worst effects of Climate Change to create a resilient, biodiverse, fair and more sustainable future for everyone within Moray”.

4.2 In addition to the Corporate Plan, the strategy should inform and link to other council policies, programmes and plans so there is a corporate cohesion in terms of all council activities, work-streams and operating practice. The main climate change themes include:

- Leadership, Governance and Policy;

- Communication, Training and Awareness;
- Energy, Buildings and Digital Connectivity;
- Transport;
- Waste; and
- Land use, Biodiversity and Adaptation.

4.3 Common throughout is the need to ensure that our work and other activities must be undertaken in such a way to benefit the people of Moray and that any associated costs do not unfairly burden those least able to pay or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes. To reflect these objectives, actions in the draft Action Plan have been prioritised on factors and contexts that include inequality and poverty; return on investment, ongoing service delivery; and organisational priorities.

5. **KEY ACTIONS**

5.1 Climate change will impact on every area of Council business. No service will be immune. It is important that council staff at all levels understand the reasons for change and that council leaders work together in order to achieve transformational change.

5.2 The Climate Change Working Group identified 57 proposed actions to help reduce the impacts of climate change. Of these, 25 actions could be completed within 1 to 2 years, 9 within 2 to 5 years, 9 within 5 to 10 years and 14 would include on-going elements. Given the overarching nature of climate change and the 2030 target, it is proposed to phase the implementation of the draft Climate Change Strategy over the next 10 years.

5.3 **APPENDIX 2** contains the draft Action Plan for the strategy which sets out 57 proposed climate change actions. Of these, subject to further investigation, it is anticipated that 42 could be realistically taken forward either within existing resources or with a moderate increase in staff resources and capital investment, 8 would require more significant resource (staff and capital investment) and 7 would require external resourcing and/or external facilitation. Decisions to increase staff and allocate additional resources can only be taken when the consultation has been completed, the Strategy reviewed in light of feedback and the Action Plan adjusted accordingly. Further work will then be undertaken on the Action Plan to ensure that the final outcomes are suitably framed and that outcome indicators are SMART. At that stage budget implications (where known) will be included, but it is anticipated that the phasing of actions as indicated above will enable the Action Plan to be managed effectively.

5.4 The main proposed actions in the draft Action Plan can be summarised as follows:

Leadership, Governance and Policy

5.4.1 There are 16 proposed actions that fall within this category. Most involve policy and guidance changes; setting new carbon reduction targets; increasing staff awareness of climate change; and ensuring that all future committee reports

include a climate change and biodiversity assessment within the summary of implications. Strategic changes that will require further investigation include:

- The possible introduction of carbon budgets across all services;
- Departmental Procurement Action Plans that address climate change; and
- Future investment decisions that apply zero and low carbon objectives.

Communication, Training and Awareness

5.4.2 There are 7 proposed actions that fall within this category. Developing a communication strategy; working and engaging with partners and ensuring that there is a greater emphasis on raising the awareness of climate change within all educational settings (Early Learning/Primary/Secondary) are viewed as key actions. School meal menus are currently focused on more sustainable foods that reduce carbon impact. This includes the promotion of vegetarian options (e.g. “meat free” days and vegan options). It is important that the number of children/young people accessing schools meals is monitored on a regular basis. Any potential decrease in uptake could suggest an increase in food poverty amongst some of the more vulnerable children/young people as a consequence of well-intended menu changes.

Energy, Buildings and Digital Connectivity

5.4.3 There are 12 proposed actions that fall within this category. These relate mainly to the improvement of buildings (houses, corporate buildings and the Learning Estate). Improving energy efficiency within the council’s housing stock is an ongoing action and the Council also promotes home improvement energy schemes for households living in the private housing sector. Raising awareness to reduce energy use and utility costs would also be promoted. Actions that will require a degree of strategic planning and leadership include:

- Developing a sustainable approach that promotes online working;
- Review the workstyles of all staff (fixed/flexible/mobile);
- Reducing the need for fixed buildings by adopting the above workstyles.

Digitisation is an existing project within the Improvement and Modernisation Plan and the ability to redesign services and rationalise our estate in light of changes to workstyles introduced as a result of the pandemic is already a live consideration, with redesign of service delivery methods being considered as part of the progress towards full recovery. Significant investment will be required to ensure that all corporate buildings (including the Learning Estate) achieve a net zero carbon target by 2030. In part, this will be achieved through prudential borrowing but external funding will ultimately be required to address the condition of the Learning Estate.

Waste

5.4.4 There are 2 proposed actions that fall within this category. These focus on encouraging a reduction of waste and also an increase in recycling rates that includes the Learning Estate. The elimination of single use plastic, packaging and a greater use of recyclable materials across school catering services improving recycling and the disposal of food waste is also proposed.

Land use, Biodiversity and Adaptation.

- 5.4.5 There are 12 proposed actions that fall within this category. These focus on the use of land to support carbon reduction; an integrated land use spatial framework bringing together the opportunities for food production, renewable energy and wood planting; additional planting and safeguarding of existing woodland; a greater emphasis of carbon reduction within the planning process and a requirement to have carbon free masterplans.

Transport

- 5.4.6 There are 8 proposed actions that fall within this category. These include the provision of public charging points; Travel Plans (for Council employees; major employers and schools); and change behaviours around active travel. Significant investment will be required to replace the council's fossil fuelled fleet by 2030. In part this will be achieved through prudential borrowing but external funding will be required in order to achieve the 2030 target.

6 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 If the draft Climate Change Strategy is approved by Council, it is proposed to carry out a wider consultation with the public and other key stakeholders including our community planning partners over the next 8 weeks ending on 30 October 2020.
- 6.2 The consultation will involve a press release; the use of social media (i.e. council website, Facebook and Twitter), copies sent to Community Councils, partner agencies, private companies working within Moray and ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders using 3 webinar sessions hosted by the Community Support Unit. An online survey will also be available to enable interested parties to make comment. The strategy will also be shared with community planning partners for comment and engagement on potential shared action. It is also intended to gather the views of children and young people through in-school groups on Learning for Sustainability and Global Citizenship.
- 6.3 All comments received during the consultation period will be considered by the Climate Change Working Group to inform the final version of the Strategy and Action Plan.

7 DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

- 7.1 To achieve a carbon neutral target by 2030, will require significant internal transformational change. If the draft Climate Change Strategy is approved, other key strategic plans will need to be reviewed and climate change actions added where appropriate. The main plans that fall into this category include:
- Local Development Plan 2020
 - Local Housing Strategy 2019-2024
 - Departmental Management Plans
 - Service Plans per individual service

7.2 Service Plans for 2021/22 will be updated later in this financial year. All climate change actions that are relevant to individual services and which can be accommodated within existing resources will be included in updated Service Plans taking into consideration elements of feedback from the community consultation. Where there are budget or resource implications, this will be considered when the final strategy and action plan is approved but may require to be deferred for consideration as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process depending on the scale of budgetary requirement and impact of phasing.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 In addition to the consultation process, there are a number of factors that Council will need to consider in terms of the proposed timescales for progressing the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan:

Recovery and Renewal

8.1.1 Recovery and Renewal of Council Services must take priority at this time and whilst sustainability including protecting our environment is a principle within the draft Recovery and Renewal Strategic Framework, staffing resources are under significant pressure.

Climate Change Action Plan

8.1.2 There is a need to refine the 57 proposed actions set out in **APPENDIX 2** to make them smart and ensure that each of the planned outcomes is clear and measurable.

Resources

8.1.3 There is a need to scope out future staffing resources and consider the wider budget implications related to implementing the Climate Change Strategy and the role of phasing within this.

Lead Officer

8.1.4 The Council is currently recruiting a new Head of Housing and Property who will support the Depute Chief Executive as the lead officer responsible for implementing the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. It is unclear when the successful candidate may be in post but an opportunity for the new Head of Service to retain an ability to influence the final strategy, given this will sit within their portfolio, is desirable.

8.2 Given all the above, it is proposed to present a final Climate Change Strategy and refined Action Plan to Council on 20 January 2021.

9. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan 2019-2024 and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)).

The draft Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030 supports the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan 2019-2024. The Council has declared a climate change emergency and the measures set out in the draft strategy seek to create a

resilient, biodiverse, fair and more sustainable future for everyone within Moray”.

(b) Policy and Legal

As a public body the Council has a number of statutory duties under the Climate Change Act 2009 in relation to reporting. Whilst there is no statutory duty to reduce emissions, the position the Council adopts in a number of our statutory plans (e.g. Planning, Transport, Procurement, Housing, etc.) will have a significant bearing on emissions.

(c) Financial Implications

Further work will be required to scope out the financial implications relating to climate change. These costs will be considered when the Action Plan is finalised and reviewed before each of the key actions are taken forward.

(d) Risk Implications

Climate change is arguably the biggest challenge that we face in our lifetime and for future generations. Action is needed now to combat the direct and current impact and to agree a pathway for a sustainable future.

(e) Staffing Implications

There will be staffing implications linked to climate change. There will be some areas where work will cease and others where an increase in staff resources are required. This will be scoped out in more detail when the final Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan is agreed. There will be an ongoing requirement to keep staffing levels under periodic review.

(f) Property

There will be property implications linked to the Climate Change Strategy. The Strategy will impact on council housing, corporate buildings and the Learning Estate. These implications will be set out in more detail as the key actions relating to Property are progressed.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Climate Change will impact on every service area delivered by the Council. It has the potential to impact on Equalities for example in respect of support for active travel and fuel poverty and will also have a socio economic impact.

(h) Consultations

Consultations have been undertaken with the Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Deputy Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), all Heads of Service, and the Climate Change Working Group. Where comments have been received, these have been included within the report.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Council is asked to approve the draft Climate Change Strategy 2020–2030 in APPENDIX 1 and the draft Action Plan set out in APPENDIX 2. The Strategy will thereafter be the subject of a wider**

consultation with partners and other key stakeholders before being presented to Council on 20 January 2021 for final approval along with a final Action Plan.

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Background Papers: With Author