

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET4 March 2021Report by Director of EnvironmentCLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to:
 - Provide the Cabinet with an update on the proposed actions to be undertaken in 2021 to permit the Council to publish a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and contribute towards Scotland's ambition to reduce emissions of all greenhouse gases to 'net-zero' by 2045 at the latest.
 - Make the Cabinet aware of the magnitude of the task facing the Council in relation to meeting requirements regarding climate change and sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Cabinet is asked to note:
 - a) The requirement to establish accurate baseline data for the Council's greenhouse gas emissions and a robust system of measurement in order to track progress;
 - b) The intention to explore the use of carbon budgeting as a key instrument for driving better environmental performance; and
 - c) The use of 'what good looks like' as a framework for the development of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

3. In August 2020, a paper on the need for a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan was brought to Cabinet. This paper advised that a new full-time Climate Change Officer post would be created.

4. The new post-holder has worked with colleagues across Council departments to complete the comprehensive annual climate change return to the Scottish Government and has led on the Scottish Government funded pilot project for the forthcoming Scottish Government Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy. This latter item will be the subject of a future Cabinet report.

5. The Climate Change Officer has also developed strong links with the Council's City Region partners through increased engagement with Climate Ready Clyde, (the regional body supporting resilience to climate change impacts). This has been a demanding few months as the Glasgow City Region's Draft Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan has recently been subject to public consultation and is currently being finalised for approval in March 2021.

6. The United Nations Conference of Parties (COP21) Agreement (Paris Agreement), to which the UK and Scotland subscribe, binds nations to hold global temperature rise to under 2 degrees Celsius. The latest round of talks are expected to direct updated action (COP26) and will take place in Glasgow in November 2021.

7. To meet this objective the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 set legally binding emissions reduction targets for Scotland as a whole. The legislation covers a range of greenhouse gasses (including carbon dioxide) which need to be net zero by 2045 at the latest. There are interim targets of a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030, and 90% by 2040 (compared to a 1990 baseline). All councils have a role in helping Scottish Government meet these national targets.

8. Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (CO₂e) is a standard unit for measuring carbon footprints. Whereas CO₂ refers only to carbon dioxide, CO₂e is a methodology which accounts for carbon and all other greenhouse gases collectively. Therefore, the Council's carbon footprint consists of lots of different greenhouse gases expressed as a single number. For clarity and simplicity, references to 'carbon, 'carbon dioxide' or 'emissions' throughout this paper are referring to carbon dioxide equivalent – i.e. the combined emissions from all greenhouse gasses collectively.

9. The Scottish Government plans to bring forward secondary legislation that alters the details of the public sector climate change reporting duties. It is possible there will be a requirement on councils to state the year by which they will cease to emit any direct greenhouse gases and their targets for reducing indirect emissions (those arising from procured goods and services). They may also be required to report on how they will align their spending plans with targets and to make their report publicly accessible.

10. The Council's current policy framework and activities will not achieve the Scottish Government's target to be carbon neutral by 2040 or achieve net-zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. While we cannot evidence this assertion yet, it should be noted that the Climate Change Committee (an independent non-departmental public body which advises the UK and devolved Governments and Parliaments on climate change) has yet to model a scenario in which Scotland's ambitious, interim 2030 target can be met. This means that it is a credible assessment that our current approach to reducing emissions is not sufficient. Identification of how short we fall is the focus of the next steps proposed in this Cabinet paper.

11. It is recognised that it is not enough for the Council alone to change its behaviours. Our residents and businesses also require to respond. From 2022, local authorities will also be asked by the Scottish Government to set out a target date for the extent to which they aim to use their influence to reduce area-wide emissions, recognising this is a national pathway that requires action from all parts of society.

12. This report focuses on the Council's approach to reduce emissions from its own activities – the role of residents and businesses will be the subject of a future report.

REPORT

Establishing carbon data and policy baselines

13. The foundation of the new strategy will be to define clear baselines. We need to fully understand what action is required to bridge the gap from what current policy delivers in terms of carbon reductions and what needs to change to reach 'net zero'. Once we understand our current emissions we can begin to identify the action required to meet the target of carbon neutrality by 2040, as a minimum.

14. The Council submitted its annual climate change return to Scottish Government in December 2021. As stated, the approach to this reporting duty is currently under review by the Scottish Government in recognition that a more robust and consistent system of monitoring progress is required. This aligns with the Council's ambition to establish an accurate carbon baseline against which we can benchmark future reductions.

15. In order to achieve this the Council is engaging a specialist consultant. The consultant will provide a baseline for carbon emissions using best practice methodology and tools. The outputs of the exercise will provide a breakdown of core emission sources from all Council buildings, fleet and operations, including waste management, as a minimum; and their percentage contribution to the Council's total emissions. This will identify which priority areas require action and inform our next steps.

16. In respect of measuring progress, it is proposed that the concept of 'carbon budgeting' is explored and will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet. This approach is supported by the UK Climate Change Committee and the Scottish Government.

17. A 'carbon budget' allocates an allowance of tonnes of carbon dioxide the Council can 'spend' within a budgetary period (usually 5 years), with the Council required to keep within its allowance over the period. Existing operations and future decisions are then quantified in terms of their carbon emissions to understand their contribution to the budget. In order to ensure that the Council maintains momentum the carbon budget decreases in each budgetary period and drives better environmental performance. The carbon budget can only be defined and applied against targets once the baseline is established.

18. For example, new emissions from a Council building could take the Council over its carbon allowance. In calculating the impact in terms of carbon, the Council could then look to offset this by reducing operations elsewhere or by capturing the excess carbon through tree-planting or other mitigation activities to ensure that it doesn't exceed its allocated carbon budget.

Development of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

19. As part of its comprehensive progress report to the UK Government in December 2020, the UK Climate Change Committee published a detailed paper looking specifically at the role and responsibilities of local authorities in delivering net zero.

20. This includes (but is not restricted to):

- Planning powers over buildings and transport
- Enforcement of building regulations
- Powers to ensure buildings meet basic energy efficiency measures
- Duties to manage climate risks such as flooding
- Duties to collect and dispose of waste
- Duties to protect the environment, wildlife and heritage

21. A series of workshops within these key services in East Renfrewshire is planned. Along with the baseline data, the outputs from the workshops will inform the proposed Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. Services will explore what service provision is likely to look like in the future. Taking into account the ambition to be carbon neutral, they will consider *what good looks like* and will include what the Council needs to **start** doing, what it needs to **stop** doing and what it needs to do **differently**.

22. The table below shows the services selected to explore this theme in the first instance. The workshops will be facilitated by the Climate Change Officer, and invitations will be cross-departmental where relevant. It must be acknowledged that other council services *do* contribute to climate change but there is a need to prioritise and recognise that we are required to sustain climate change action over a minimum period of 25 years. Not all of the necessary tasks can be completed at the same time or within a short timescale.

Service	Responsible lead
Planning & Building Standards	Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer)
Housing Services	Head of Strategic Services – Environment
Estates & Property Services	Head of Strategic Services – Environment
Transportation	Head of Environment (Chief Planning Officer)
Fleet Services	Head of Operations – Environment
Waste Management	Head of Operations – Environment
Procurement	Chief Procurement Officer

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

23. The current financial aspects associated with this report will be met from existing departmental finances. However, there will be an ongoing need for financial investment in the delivery of the climate change agenda. In the longer term the financial implications will be significant in reaching carbon emission reduction targets and will need to be addressed on an individual service and project basis. However there will be a cost in progressing this analysis. The immediate costs are being calculated and will be the subject of a report to Cabinet in a few months. Additional staffing resources of around £100K are likely to be required.

CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

24. Partnership working and consultation will be required to make sure that the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan shapes all council services. This will be achieved through the creation of the working groups outlined in para 19 above. An informal briefing session will be arranged for members who are keen to understand the subject and proposed approach in greater detail. Once the workshops noted at paras 22 and 23 have been completed a member officer working group will be established.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

25. There are no immediate direct legal, technical or staffing implications arising from this report.

CONCLUSIONS

26. The actions outlined in this report are the first steps of a journey that will take over twenty years. However, the long time frame should not be seen as a reason to delay what is essential action. These proposed actions will see the council by the end of the calendar year to begin to draft a meaningful climate strategy action plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- b) The intention to explore the use of carbon budgeting as a key instrument for driving better environmental performance; and
- c) The use of 'what good looks like' as a framework for the development of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Director of Environment

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