

Urgent Item

Special General Meeting of the Council: 14 May 2019.

Declaration of Climate Emergency.

Report by Chief Executive.

1. Purpose of Report

To reaffirm the Council's commitment to take action towards carbon neutrality and consider a declaration of a 'Climate Emergency'.

2. Recommendations

The Council is invited to note:

2.1.

That 'Climate Emergency' is an internationally recognised declaration being used by local authorities to publicly declare concern on the adverse global impact of the changing climate.

2.2.

That the declaration also serves as a commitment to take urgent action and aspire towards carbon neutrality.

2.3.

The priority in the Council Plan 2018 to 2023 which relates to a 'vibrant carbon neutral economy which supports local businesses and stimulates investment in all our communities'.

It is recommended:

2.4.

That, in order to reaffirm the Council's existing priority with respect to working towards a carbon neutral economy, the Council declares a Climate Emergency:

2.5.

That the Chief Executive considers further delivery plan targets associated with the Council Plan priority, referred to at paragraph 2.3 above, for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 September 2019.

3. Climate Emergency

3.1.

'Climate Emergency' is an internationally recognised declaration being used by local authorities to publicly declare concern on the adverse global impact of the changing climate. The declaration also serves as a commitment to take urgent action and aspire towards carbon neutrality. Over 70 local authorities in the UK have now declared a 'Climate Emergency' and pledged to make their areas carbon neutral by 2030.

3.2.

One of the priorities in the Council Plan is for a 'vibrant carbon neutral economy which supports local businesses and stimulates investment in all our communities'. As well as supporting the sustainability of the county, this will also support national targets to increase electricity consumption from renewable sources and to reduce carbon emissions.

3.3.

The Leader recently restated this priority for the Council and confirmed that work was ongoing to look across the whole community to see how to further contribute to this outcome. The Council recently announced plans to investigate an additional two sites for community wind farm projects in Orkney. As well as major developments of this kind there are opportunities to change the way things are done which will reduce carbon use in Orkney in many areas such as transport, agriculture and fishing.

3.4.

In addition, the Council is keen to work with young people and communities with ideas for smaller-scale initiatives that can make a real difference when it comes to making Orkney carbon neutral. Initiatives to help meet this outcome could include reducing the amount of waste produced in the county, an increase in use of renewable fuels for Council transport and buildings, and development of renewable energy projects.

3.5.

Members are asked to consider the formal declaration of a Climate Emergency. In addition, it is proposed that the Council will:

- Work with partners to continue to educate the community and promoting the understanding of the climate emergency.
- Work with partners to identify and implement actions our community can take to contribute to carbon reduction.
- Develop further delivery plan targets associated with this priority for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 September 2019.

4. Links to Council Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority theme of Enterprising Communities.

5. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities of Strong Communities and a Vibrant Economy.

6. Financial Implications

6.1.

There are no immediate financial implications arising from the report recommendations.

6.2.

The Council alone cannot fund massive change without financial support from governments. The Council will work alongside National Governments where possible and will continue to try to be at the forefront of change wherever possible.

6.3.

If additional targets and actions are developed for the Council Plan, some reprioritisation of existing actions and budgets will be required in order to ensure delivery of the targets and priorities.

7. Legal Aspects

There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations of this report.

8. Contact Officers

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