

## **Item: 10**

**Policy and Resources Committee: 24 September 2019.**

**Climate Emergency.**

**Council Delivery Plan – Targets.**

**Joint Report by Chief Executive and Executive Director of  
Development and Infrastructure.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider next steps in developing and progressing Council Delivery Plan targets where these apply to responding to the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That, on 14 May 2019, in order to reaffirm its existing priority with respect to working towards a carbon neutral economy, the Council declared a Climate Emergency.

#### **2.2.**

That, following the declaration of a Climate Emergency, the Chief Executive was requested to consider further delivery plan targets associated with the Council Plan priority of a 'vibrant carbon neutral economy which supports local businesses and stimulates investment in all our communities'.

#### **2.3.**

That, in order to develop achievable and measurable targets, baseline data is required so that progress can be measured.

#### **2.4.**

The project activity, outlined in section 4 of this report, which is currently underway and which will contribute to the outcome of a carbon neutral economy.

#### **2.5.**

The role of other stakeholders which will be essential to maximise Orkney's response to the Climate Emergency.

## **2.6**

The proposed next steps, outlined in section 5 to this report, which will seek to increase the effort applied by the Council in responding to the Climate Emergency over the next year.

**It is recommended:**

### **2.7.**

That the Chief Executive should submit a report to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to be held on 18 February 2020, outlining progress with developing Council Delivery Plan targets in response to the Climate Emergency, together with any resource implications which may arise from this.

## **3. Background**

### **3.1.**

On 14 May 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and undertook to:

- 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.

### **3.2.**

This declaration reaffirmed the Council's existing target outcome for "a vibrant carbon neutral economy which supports local businesses and stimulates investment in all our communities" as stated in the Council Plan 2018 to 2023.

## **4. Existing Project Activity**

### **4.1.**

There are several actions in the Council Delivery Plan which contribute to the target outcome for "a vibrant carbon neutral economy which supports local businesses and stimulates investment in all our communities".

#### **4.1.1.**

For example, the Council is developing strategic projects, particularly to capitalise on the renewable sector.

#### **4.1.2.**

In addition, the Council is progressing a significant portfolio of carbon reduction initiatives such as community wind farm projects, hydrogen strategy, shore power for ferries, electric vehicle infrastructure, hydrogen ferries and significant financial investment into Orkney's housing stock by way of insulation and heating upgrades.

#### **4.2.**

Beyond the Council, Orkney has a very long and successful history of leading the world on low carbon and renewable project activity.

#### **4.2.1.**

For example, research by the Orkney Renewable Energy Forum predicted that Orkney has the highest population of directly employed and experienced experts in the renewables field in the world and has a reputation for delivering innovative solutions to energy problems.

#### **4.2.2.**

Current project activities including BIGHIT and REFLEX are examples of the energy community working together to tackle innovative solutions to energy challenges.

#### **4.3.**

The Orkney Partnership is committed to sustainability, which is one of its core values. On 18 September 2019, The Orkney Partnership Board received a report on the Climate Emergency. The Board determined that a short life working group should be established across Partners to progress action in relation to the Climate Emergency and that the updated Orkney Community Plan for 2019 to 2022, incorporating the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan, should be revised to contain a new commitment to the Climate Emergency.

#### **4.3.1.**

During 2019 to 2020, Orkney Partnership Board will share the knowledge and understanding which partners currently hold with regard to climate change and consider how it might collectively add value to the actions which partners are undertaking individually to address the climate emergency.

#### **4.4.**

The Orkney Community, with the Council as a part of this, is therefore well underway with exploring and progressing projects to secure Orkney's own energy sustainability and play a role in supporting national targets to increase electricity consumption from renewables and so reduce carbon emissions. However, more can and must be done to address the Climate Emergency and it is now necessary to increase the effort and resources applied to this endeavour across Orkney in the months and years ahead.

## **5. Next Steps**

### **5.1.**

The Council cannot address this issue alone. The Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency complements the concern which has been expressed within the community in respect of this issue and also the long history of innovation and business development in Orkney in the renewable and low carbon energy fields.

### **5.2.**

There are many large and small measures that can be taken to reduce carbon emissions and it is important that the Council works with partners to continue to raise awareness with the community and promote an understanding about the Climate Emergency and to co-ordinate, where possible and appropriate, the necessary changes to behaviour, investment and infrastructure to make a meaningful contribution to addressing the emergency.

### **5.3.**

Further Council Delivery Plan targets will be developed in order to demonstrate and evidence the commitment to Climate Emergency. However, in order for achievable and measurable targets to be developed, baseline data is required so that progress can be measured. It is therefore proposed as a first step to build on existing business and community stakeholder relationships, most specifically the Energy Stakeholder Group and the Community Planning Partnership, to formalise an audit of existing expertise and activity, and then plan forward from that the key steps and opportunities for each agency to further address the Climate Emergency. This approach was discussed initially with the Energy Stakeholder Group on 19 August 2019.

### **5.4.**

A further subgroup meeting involving key industry representatives and Council staff took place on 17 September 2019 and, following the decision of the Orkney Partnership noted at section 4.3 above, it is proposed to establish a consolidated cross-partner and industry working group to progress these matters further.

### **5.5.**

The following matters are proposed as a starting point for identifying priorities and actions for a future working group:

- A specific target for carbon emission reduction needs to be developed and agreed. This will require an analysis of Orkney's current carbon footprint so that targets can be proposed and improvement measured, also taking into account national targets and policy. The Orkney Energy Audit is currently being updated as part of the ReFLEX project and this could provide some base data for targets.

- It is important to be able to demonstrate that emissions are being reduced and therefore there is a task to capture the work across the Orkney community which will contribute to carbon reduction and ensure it is possible to measure the actual impact on carbon emissions each one will have.
- Policies and practice across the Council should be reviewed to ensure the impact on the environment is assessed and that measures to reduce or eliminate carbon emissions are considered.
- Work with partners to identify and implement actions the community can take to contribute to carbon reduction. It is important to engage with young people and communities to explore ideas for smaller-scale initiatives that can make a real difference to reducing carbon emissions.
- It is important to work with the community on ensuring information on this topic is available to ensure a greater understanding enabling people to make informed choices on how to adapt their own behaviours to help reduce carbon emissions.
- To consider appropriate forums and events to profile Orkney activity in this area, noting the potential to link an event to the potential United Nations Conference of the Parties conference which may shortly be confirmed for Glasgow for autumn 2020.
- Resource capacity to co-ordinate the establishment and delivery of Council Delivery Plan actions and targets to address the Council and stakeholder efforts to address the Climate Emergency.
- To investigate opportunities to enhance resource capacity to ensure that as much funding as possible for projects aimed at tackling climate change can be drawn into and utilised in Orkney, as opportunities are currently being missed due to staffing capacity issues in the Council and other partners.
- Identify the role that the Orkney community believes Government(s) should play in supporting the necessary step change in activity and investment to match the Climate Emergency ambitions of both the Scottish and UK Governments, and the Council.
- Inform a response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the role of public sector bodies in tackling climate change which was published on 11 September 2019.

## **6. Resources**

### **6.1.**

It is inevitable that the levels of change which will be required to address the Climate Emergency will necessitate significant investment in new infrastructure, upgrades to technology and education and awareness campaigns. Part of the next phase of work will be to work with partners to identify these resource challenges and to identify potential funding sources. Undertaking this work will require dedicated time and effort to co-ordinate and deliver. It is not possible or appropriate to expect the level of dedicated work required to match the ambition which has been established by the Council within existing Council staff resources which have become increasingly stretched in recent years to cover existing business.

## **6.2.**

It may be possible to address this through partnership working and pooling of resources across the Orkney Energy Stakeholder Group and this will be discussed further with stakeholder businesses and partner agencies. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the Council may require to establish a dedicated project officer role to take forward the Council's contribution to this programme. The extent of this work will depend on how much resource partners are able to commit and will be identified over the next four to six weeks through discussions with partners, and if necessary, a report will be submitted to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to be held on 18 February 2020, to establish the resources necessary to establish a dedicated Council post to manage this work. Initial estimates of the potential costs for the Council should this be required is circa £60,000.

## **7. 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.

## **8. 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 priority of Strong Communities and a Vibrant Economy.

## **9. Financial Implications**

### **9.1.**

There are no immediate financial consequences to the report recommendations.

### **9.2.**

The report identifies that resources will be required to address the Climate Emergency including investment in new infrastructure, upgrades to technology and education and awareness campaigns and a requirement for a project budget of £60,000 for a project officer may be forthcoming to a future meeting of the Committee.

### **9.3.**

When the Council approved the revenue budget for 2019 to 2020 it reaffirmed that the policies of presumption against new commitments and the moratorium on staff establishment increases should continue to remain in force, with the following conditions:

- Exceptions might be considered for new commitments which are 100% funded by external bodies – proposals involving the Council in partnership funding shall require compensatory savings to be identified.

- The Council should consider undertaking new statutory duties or any case where it was considered that statutory duties were not being fulfilled, however, such duties having financial implications should first be reported to the relevant Committees for approval.
- The Council should consider new commitments where compensatory savings could be identified – any Committee considering such recommendations should, in the first instance, seek to identify savings from within its revenue budget.

## **10. Legal Aspects**

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

## **11. Contact Officers**

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