
To: INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY BOARD
On: 6 NOVEMBER 2019

Report by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**Heading: CONSULTATION: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SECTOR BODIES IN
TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE**

1. Summary

- 1.1 As part of the 'Big Climate Conversation', the Scottish Government is consulting with public bodies about their role in tackling climate change.
 - 1.2 This report provides a brief summary of the background and themes of the consultation and seeks approval of Board members for a response (appendix 1) to be submitted on behalf of Renfrewshire Council.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Infrastructure, Land and Environment Policy Board:
 - (i) approve the content and submission of Renfrewshire Council's response to the consultation on the role of Public Sector Bodies in tackling climate change.
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3. Background

- 3.1 On 14 May 2019, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform gave a statement to Parliament about Scotland's response to the global climate emergency and committed to consult widely about how to end Scotland's contribution to global warming.

- 3.2 Outputs from the 'Big Climate Conversation', of which the consultation paper is part, will help inform the government's Climate Change Plan update and will inform plans to bring forward secondary legislation that alter the details of the public sector climate change reporting duties.
- 3.3 The consultation contains 9 questions and seeks views on public sector training and information requirements, proposed changes to the existing support bodies relating to climate change and proposed changes to the reporting arrangements as part of the annual Public Sector Climate Change Duties return.
- 3.4 Members will note that the annual Public Sector Climate Change Duties return is also reported to this Board, based on the current template. The changes proposed in the consultation should assist in the production of a more accessible report, particularly for a public audience, focused on local priorities and ambition which will clearly articulate the actions and progress made to tackle climate change against locally set targets, including details of allocated resources.
- 3.5 More broadly, Members will also be aware that Renfrewshire Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and a cross-party Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG) has been established, supported by a cross-departmental Climate Emergency Officers Group (which also includes Renfrewshire Leisure and HSCP officers).
- 3.6 Members of the CEWG have highlighted the value of ensuring access to relevant and clear information which describes the wide range of activities Renfrewshire Council already carries out to reduce carbon emissions and outlines short, medium and long term priorities and actions. The proposed approach outlined in the consultation also provides the opportunity to develop an appropriate platform for this.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community Planning** - None.
4. **Legal** – None.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the

recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risk** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – COSLA Economy and Environment Board will also be submitting a response to the consultation on behalf of COSLA Members.
13. **Climate Risk** – This report details a proposed response to the consultation on Public Sector Bodies reporting on climate change.

List of Background Papers: None

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Appendix 1

Consultation Questions

Q1. What additional training, information or guidance do you think Public Sector Bodies need to help them increase their action on climate change?

The opportunity to learn from best practice across other public sector bodies on an ongoing basis would be welcomed.

Additional guidance and sharing of best practice about how to best involve communities and communities of interest in developing a local approach to tackling climate change would be useful, particularly given the role of local authorities to empower and engage with our communities and provide effective leadership.

Training and/or guidance on how to balance our climate ambitions with the wider ambition for our areas within the current financial constraints – particularly sharing successful cost-effective examples that can be replicated elsewhere.

Information on the range of funding streams and funders for elements of climate change activities, gathered together in one place, would also be very helpful.

Information on baseline emissions data for geographic areas (beyond those within the specific control of the local authority) would be welcomed.

Q2. What are your views on the proposed structure for the High Ambition Climate Network of Chief Executives and Elected Members?

It is unclear how 'the most ambitious' public sector bodies will be identified and against what measures. Membership could be broadened out to recognise the additional support needed in this area across the public sector and the appetite to learn and develop and links established with other networks where learning could be shared.

Q3. Do you agree that Public Sector Bodies should be required to set targets for when they will achieve zero direct emissions, and for reduced indirect emissions?

Yes / no / don't know

Please explain your answer.

In common with many other local authorities, Renfrewshire Council has declared a climate emergency and has set a local target for net zero emissions, so this is welcomed.

Q4. Do you agree that Public Sector Bodies should report annually on how they use their resources to contribute to reducing emissions?

Yes / no / don't know

Please explain your answer.

Linked to the above, we believe our communities and citizens want to understand where our efforts are focused and the financial contribution to this, so welcome this within the current reporting arrangements.

Q5. Do you agree that the details of what Public Sector Bodies are required to report on should be set out in statutory guidance instead of on the face of secondary legislation (otherwise known as an Order)?

Yes / no / don't know

Please explain your answer.

We acknowledge that this area is fast developing and requires some degree of agility within the reporting arrangements which would be enhanced through the use of statutory guidance rather than an Order.

Q6. Do you agree to the proposed changes to the list of Public Sector Bodies that are required to annually report their emissions?

Yes / no / don't know

If you answered no, please specify which aspect of the proposal you disagree with and why.

This reflects our view that only bodies who have power over their own emissions, through buildings, their fleet etc, should be required to report in this way. This could be reviewed annually.

Q7. Do you agree with our proposals for amending the reporting requirements as set out above?

Yes / no / don't know

If you answered no, please specify which aspect of the proposal you disagree with.

Yes, the changes should reduce repetition and provide an opportunity for the report to be more accessible and more reflective of the local environment, opportunities and challenges.

Q8. Is there anything else you think should be added to the reporting duties, or anything else you think should be removed?

In particular the changes to part 4 are welcomed, outcome-focused progress updates relevant to local challenges and opportunities feels of more value than the more prescriptive objectives outlined in the existing Order.

Perhaps there is also an opportunity to reflect the importance of the civic leadership role local authorities have within communities and the opportunities to work with other key stakeholders.

Q9. Do you agree that Public Sector Bodies should each make their own report on emissions reductions publicly available?

Yes / no / don't know

Please explain your answer.

This is clearly an area with increasing public interest, and it is important to harness that interest as tackling the climate emergency will require the contribution and commitment of a range of stakeholders across our communities.

Advice and guidance on an appropriate 'user friendly' format of reporting that reflects what the public would like to know in a way that is accessible and interesting, would be welcomed to ensure consistency of approach.

Other comments.

Local authorities and other public bodies have a critical role to play in tackling the climate emergency and this recognition is welcomed, but we also recognise that significant and sustained progress cannot be made in isolation and without resources, support and new ways of working.