
To: Climate Change Sub-Committee

On: 9 December 2020

Report By: Head of Policy and Commissioning

Heading: Climate Change - Partner and Citizen Engagement Proposals

1. Summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 27 February 2020, full Council considered the findings of the Climate Emergency Working Group, which had been established to consider what the Council needs to do to achieve the agreed target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- 1.2 It was recognised that to achieve these ambitious targets, significant changes would be required to the way that people live and work in Renfrewshire, and that the Council alone would not be able to drive this agenda. The report outlined a number of key actions which officers should progress to ensure that the Council was undertaking meaningful ongoing engagement with local partners, businesses, residents and communities on their role in tackling climate change and to develop ideas as to how all stakeholders can jointly respond to the challenge.
- 1.3 This can be achieved through a range of existing mechanisms, however Council agreed that consideration should be given to the possible establishment of new mechanisms such as citizens assemblies and partnership forums. This paper provides an update on these proposals.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members note work being undertaken to progress and establish by Spring 2021:
- A Renfrewshire Citizens Assembly / Forum on climate Change; and
 - A partnership forum on climate change linked to community planning governance structures.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 27 June 2019, Renfrewshire Council declared a climate emergency, and set the target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A Climate Emergency Working Group was established to consider what actions the Council needed to take to achieve this ambitious target.
- 3.2 The Climate Emergency Working Group reported its findings to full Council on 27 February 2020, and it was agreed that a series of recommendations would be progressed by the Council and partners to work towards achieving this target.
- 3.3 The report to Council in February 2020, indicated that the Council contributes to 3-4% of overall carbon emissions in Renfrewshire and that the 2030 target for net zero carbon emissions in Renfrewshire represents a significant challenge, and will only be achieved through the collaboration and commitment of businesses, communities and citizens.
- 3.4 The Climate Emergency Working Group recognised that this will require a step change:- responding to the climate emergency will need to be seen by all stakeholders as one of our most significant priorities, with the Council providing leadership to drive and influence this agenda at both a local and national level
- 3.5 The Climate Emergency Working Group identified several actions which should be prioritised by the Council in terms of citizen and partner engagement. These are as follows:
- Introduce new mechanisms for engaging with citizens and businesses on potential responses to the climate emergency such as through citizens assemblies or climate forums, including consideration of how to report the Council's progress on climate change

- Actively engage with young people through the annual Youth Assembly, and involve young people in the Council's decisions on our climate change actions.
 - Establish a new partnership forum to drive Renfrewshire wide change on climate issues
- 3.6 This paper provides an update on two proposed areas of engagement which are currently being progressed by officers: - engagement with local people and communities on climate issues and with community planning partners. Opportunities for engagement with children and young people are currently being explored with the relevant Council services.

4. Engagement with local people and communities

- 4.1 One of the first stages in terms of the Council's engagement with local people and communities on climate change, has been progressed through the recent issue of the Public Services Panel survey to nearly 1500 local residents.
- 4.2 The Panel survey has been issued in order to provide more detailed feedback from local people on the impact of COVID-19 on their lives, and the opportunity has been taken to include questions in relation to views on climate change and importance of the natural environment and greenspace in Renfrewshire. It is anticipated that initial results from the Panel survey will be available in early 2021.
- 4.3 In line with the actions agreed by Council at section 3.5 on engagement, officers have been undertaking further research into the potential development of a Climate Change Citizens Assembly or Forum in Renfrewshire to support the progression of local climate change ambitions. Examples of existing climate change forums and citizens assemblies are provided below.

Citizens assemblies

- 4.4 Citizens assemblies are broadly forums in which participants learn, discuss and reach conclusions about how to respond to issues. Information may be presented by a range of specialists including academics, researchers, campaigners and other stakeholders before participants are asked to balance any evidence presented and decide what they think. Efforts are made to recruit a reflective sample of the population in terms of demographics and attitudes. Citizens' assemblies are independently facilitated and outputs are generally formalised in a written report.

Climate Assembly UK

- 4.5 In June 2019 the UK Government and Parliament passed legislation committing the UK to reaching 'net-zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The actions required to achieve this address energy use, travel and food.

Climate Assembly UK – commissioned by six cross-party House of Commons Select Committees – sought to engage members of the public to discuss and determine collaborative action to reduce carbon emissions and reach the net zero target by 2050.

- 4.6 In November 2019 Climate Assembly UK invited 30,000 individuals from across the UK to take part in the process. 100 assembly members were chosen at random from those who expressed a desire to take part. The Assembly met over six weekends in spring 2020 and the final report – ‘The Path to Net Zero’ - was published on Thursday 10th September 2020. The report provides background on the assembly’s process and membership and details the final recommendations that have been presented to the six select committees. Key themes include land use, what we buy, domestic heat and energy use and greenhouse gas removal.

Citizens’ Assembly of Scotland

- 4.7 The Citizen’s Assembly of Scotland was established in October 2019 to explore emerging issues in Scotland’s society. Its remit is relatively broad and seeks to consider three questions:
- What kind of country are we seeking to build?
 - How best can we overcome the challenges Scotland and the world face in the 21st century, including those arising from Brexit? and;
 - What further work should be carried out to give us the information we need to make informed choices about the future of the country?
- 4.8 The Assembly consists of over 100 people randomly selected from across the country to represent the adult population in respect of age, gender, socio-economic class, educational qualifications, ethnic groups and political attitudes. Assembly members receive a financial incentive of £200 per weekend in recognition of their time and contribution. Travel, accommodation and other reasonable costs are also covered. The Assembly is led by two independent conveners and supported by an impartial secretariat.
- 4.9 Between October 2019 and February 2020, the Assembly met four times to learn, discuss and deliberate key issues pertaining the three overarching questions. After a pause in activity owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Assembly reconvened in September 2020 in a remote, online format. Assembly participants will meet a total of four times in the latter half of 2020, with the final sessions focussed on the impact of and response to Covid-19 in Scotland.

Scotland’s Climate Assembly

- 4.10 On the 25th September 2019 the Climate Change Bill was passed in the Scottish Parliament. This legislation commits Scotland to becoming a net-zero emissions society by 2045. The legislation also requires Scottish Ministers to establish a citizens’ assembly to consider how to prevent or mitigate the effects of climate change and recommend measure to achieve emission reduction targets.

- 4.11 The form and function of Scotland's Climate Assembly is like that of the Citizen's Assembly of Scotland. Members are tasked with making recommendations on how Scotland should tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way. The Assembly is independent of Ministers, Government and Parliament, and aims to be broadly representative of the Scottish population. It is led by independent conveners and supported by an impartial secretariat.
- 4.12 During October 2020 the public were asked to submit ideas online for consideration by the Assembly. A selection on these ideas will form the basis for discussion at 6 Assembly meetings taking place between November 2020 and March 2021. Members of the public will be able to apply to observe these meetings, which are all being delivered remotely.
- 4.13 Scotland's Climate Assembly is required to set out its recommendations in a report to the Scottish Parliament. This original deadline for this was February 2021 but due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic this has been extended.

Local Citizens' Assemblies - Camden Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis

- 4.14 The Camden Citizens' Assembly on the Climate Crisis was the first citizens' assembly on climate change to be run by a local authority in the UK. The assembly was led by officers from Camden Council, with oversight from an advisory board and support from the Involve Foundation (also involved in the design of Climate Assembly UK) and the Democratic Society.
- 4.15 Camden Council employed a team of Community Researchers to carry out door-to-door and on street recruitment. Individuals were approached at random, with researchers given target numbers per ward to ensure representative coverage throughout the borough. More than 150 residents were recruited, and this was reduced through random sampling to around 50 individuals. Each assembly member was provided with a £150 financial incentive.
- 4.16 In July 2019 the assembly members met over three sessions to develop a series of scalable local actions and create a framework a local Climate Action Plan. The assembly was presented with information from expert witnesses and over 200 submissions from the wider community. Engagement events were held with local schools and businesses to ensure a representative sample of ideas were presented to the assembly for consideration.
- 4.17 The actions from the Camden Citizens' Assembly were presented to Camden's full Council meeting in October 2019. The Council's unanimously accepted the 17 actions proposed by the assembly and have since been consolidated into the Camden Climate Action Plan 2020-2025. The Plan

proposes a five-year programme of projects and activities which aim to make Camden a net-zero carbon place by 2030.

- 4.18 In order for the Council to engage closely with local people and communities at every step in its journey toward net zero carbon emissions, it will be necessary to use both new and existing mechanisms for two way conversations to occur. In Renfrewshire, a variety of existing mechanisms already exist to engage on these issues, including through community planning groups, Local Partnerships, Renfrewshire Youth Voice and through our Public Services Panel of 1500 local residents.
- 4.19 The experience of local authorities such as Camden that have used climate forums/assemblies, indicates that these can offer a very different opportunity to engage with local people specifically on climate change issues, and to develop different ideas for change. In particular, a citizens assembly or forum would help the Council to be able to test out the impact of proposals on individual behaviours and to develop ideas which could be successfully implemented on a Renfrewshire wide basis.
- 4.20 It is recommended that officers proceed to develop proposals to establish a local Climate Change Citizen's Assembly / Forum, and work to have this in place during Spring 2021. Given the impact of COVID specific consideration will have to be made in terms of how to engage with local people in an inclusive way given the impact of ongoing restrictions in terms of large groups meeting in public places.

5. Engagement with local partners

- 5.1 A range of different mechanisms currently exist within Renfrewshire to support close partnership working. Prior to the development of revised community planning structures in 2016, a Greener Renfrewshire Group was formally part of the community planning governance and was comprised of a range of local and national organisations and community level groups, which had a core focus on environmental issues such as climate change.
- 5.2 In terms of community planning structures, there is no Renfrewshire specific partnership group or forum with a current remit relating to climate change. The Economic Leadership Panel does have a specific role to play in terms of working with businesses and economic leader to promote a green economic recovery from COVID-19, and maximising available opportunities to promote the development of new green sectors in Renfrewshire.
- 5.3 As set out in the report from the Climate Emergency Working Group to full Council in February 2020, it will be necessary to work very closely with all community planning partners in Renfrewshire to address climate change. It will only be possible to achieve the challenging targets set by Council to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030, if all partners work together to consider what they can do individually and jointly to fundamentally reduce levels of carbon emissions.

- 5.4 With this in mind, a proposal has been developed for consideration by the Community Planning Partnership on 7 December, to establish a Climate Change Action Group in Renfrewshire.
- 5.5 Subject to this being agreed, officers from the Chief Executive's Service would work with services and with community planning partners to establish this group during Spring 2021. A remit for the group will be developed and work will be undertaken to ensure broad representation is achieved on the group in terms of membership – to include national, Renfrewshire wide and local community level organisations.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial Implications** – none
2. **HR & Organisational Development Implications** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning Implications** – none
4. **Legal Implications** – none
5. **Property/Assets Implications** – none
6. **Information Technology Implications** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights Implications** - 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 Implications** - none
9. **Procurement Implications** - none
10. **Risk Implications** - none
11. **Privacy Impact Implications** - none
12. **Cosla Policy position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** – the purpose of this report is to progress the Council's actions to respond to the climate emergency

List of Background Papers - none

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