
To: Climate Change Sub-Committee

On: 28 October 2020

Report By: Head of Policy and Commissioning

Heading: Update on the Council's response to the Climate Emergency

1. Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides a summary of the work undertaken to date by the Council to respond to the climate emergency at a strategic level. It outlines the work undertaken specifically by the Climate Emergency Working Group, following the declaration of a climate emergency by Renfrewshire Council in June 2019.
- 1.2 The report also highlights the key recommendations agreed by Council in February 2020 to respond to the climate emergency, and summarises the detailed actions approved at that time. Whilst service level activities in relation to climate change have continued to be progressed in line with existing priorities, the report notes that at a strategic level work on the climate change agenda was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3 An update on COVID-19 and associated key recent policy developments is also provided for information at section 5, which has been used to inform proposals on the next steps for the progression of the Council's response to the climate emergency, which are set out at section 6 for consideration by members.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members:
- note the update provided on the work that has been undertaken to date by the Council to strategically respond to the climate agenda;
 - note the update on recent policy developments and the impact of COVID-19 at section 4 and 5 and;
 - agree the next steps for progressing the Council's response to the climate emergency set out at section 6.
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3. Background

- 3.1 Prior to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, a report was approved by Council on the 27th of February 2020, outlining the activities and recommendations of the Climate Emergency Working Group (CEWG) to respond to the climate emergency in Renfrewshire.
- 3.2 The shared ethos behind the work of the group was that there must be a Council and Renfrewshire wide focus on moving beyond target setting into action and that the Council would act as a local leader, progressing action within our own organisation and encouraging engagement across other sectors and our communities to create the collective effort needed to meet the challenges of this emergency.
- 3.3 The CEWG recognised the range of activities already undertaken by Renfrewshire Council and made recommendations to develop this programme of work and actions to be taken to both reduce and offset carbon emissions, with a primary focus on the reduction of carbon emissions.
- 3.4 The CEWG was supported by an officer working group, which was established to bring together a range of key people within the Council that are involved in climate change related activities. Officers provided presentations and briefings to the CEWG on a range of issues, which supported the development of the CEWG's recommendations to Council.
- 3.5 Early priorities recommended by the CEWG and agreed by the Council in February 2020 include:
- establishing a sub-committee of the Leadership Board to provide governance to the workstream
 - developing an adaptation plan for Renfrewshire Council
 - mainstreaming climate emergency within the Council and aligning staffing resource to support this
 - engaging with communities, key partners and the wider business community
 - identifying potential funding and other opportunities.
- 3.6 As members will be aware, the establishment of the Leadership Board sub-committee was agreed at the 16 September 2020 meeting of the Leadership Board, membership has been agreed and a timetable of meetings has been established.
- 3.7 In addition to the key priority areas identified in the Council report in February, a high-level action plan was also approved. The action plan is set out in Appendix 1 with a range of actions detailed against a number of key themes.

4. Activity post March 2020

- 4.1 In the weeks following the Council meeting in February, the organisation was required to move urgently to respond to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of pandemic and associated restrictions on the work of the organisation has been unprecedented, and work by officers to progress the climate change recommendations made by Council was paused. Services, in line with national guidelines and capacity, wherever possible continued to progress planned work linked to the climate change agenda.
- 4.2 As highlighted in 3.6 strategic work to support the Council's response to the climate emergency was able to initially resume in August 2020, followed in September 2020 by the establishment of the Climate Change sub-committee to oversee this work. The Climate Change Officer Group is also in the process of being re-established.

- 4.3 Since the initial report to Council in February 2020, the pandemic has significantly changed the way in which people live and work. For example:
- modes of travel have been considerably impacted with many people working from home and no longer using public or personal transport to travel to work, whilst other people may be travelling shorter distances. Air travel has also been significantly restricted.
 - purchasing habits for goods and services have changed, with the resulting impact on climate change being unclear; and
 - use of green space and local outdoor facilities has increased, with people looking to utilise local outdoor spaces, and to cycle and walk in areas for leisure purposes.

5. Policy context

- 5.1 The Scottish Government has also continued to prioritise work on the climate change agenda, rooting climate change action within the national response to COVID-19. There are also a range of potential new opportunities that the Council and its partners may wish to grasp to advance local ambitions in relation to climate change.
- 5.2 Members will also be aware Council recently agreed to develop an Economic Recovery Plan and a Social Renewal Plan for Renfrewshire. Like the national approach, both plans will also develop the theme of green recovery at a local level, ensuring that opportunities within this agenda are maximised.
- 5.3 In September 2020, the Scottish Government published their Programme for Government 2020-2021. While this programme focuses on recovery and rebuilding from the pandemic, this is done through a 'green lens' to support efforts to tackle climate change. It also builds on the more positive changes in societal behaviour due to the pandemic, as outlined in paragraph 4.3 above.
- 5.4 Broadly underpinning the Programme for Government is the thinking that Scotland's social and wellbeing recovery from the pandemic will be based on the economy, particularly the development of 'good, green jobs' in our growth sectors and that the country must particularly invest in Scotland's young people's futures in these industries.
- 5.5 £100m was announced for the green jobs fund comprising £50m to Scottish Enterprise organisations and £50m to businesses and supply chains in manufacturing, tech and land-based organisations. £60m was announced for the 'Youth Guarantee' to support young people and a more recently published paper on the role out of this scheme highlights that local authorities should support the Youth Guarantee through the offering of opportunities within our organisations, particularly 'green apprenticeships'.

Programme for Government

- Move from 'at risk' into growth sectors –green and digital
- National Training Transition Fund to support 10,000 people
- Youth Guarantee to include green apprenticeships
- £1.6 billion to transform heat and energy efficiency in our buildings
- 18,000 hectares of new forest per year by 2024
- £150m for forestry projects, £150m for flood risk management, £20m in 20/21 for peat bogs and £3m biodiversity challenge fund
- £70 million to improve local recycling
- Active travel funding - £500m infrastructure funding over 5 years
- 20-minute neighbourhoods
- Enhanced housing standards including carbon and green space
- Intention to hold a Citizens Assembly in late autumn
- Develop community led regional hubs
- 'Climate Action Towns'.

£100 million Green Jobs Fund



Investing £60m to support a new Youth Guarantee



- 5.6 The Programme for Government articulates the ambition that employability and skills programmes will work alongside significant financial investments and together, good, stable, green jobs for people will be created, which in turn will support their personal wellbeing.
- 5.7 There is a focus on district heating schemes, including an additional £25m 'Mission Clyde' funding for zero carbon energy infrastructure and heat networks for residential and commercial premises along the river Clyde.
- 5.8 There has been a new funding call for the £50 million Green Recovery Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme (LCITP) which seeks to support low carbon and renewable heat projects in Scotland and is open to business, community projects and local authorities.
- 5.9 There has also been the restart of the £200m Green Growth Accelerator (GGA) infrastructure investment programme, which was first announced in last year's Programme for Government but was paused due to Covid-19. The Scottish Government have recently approached COSLA with a proposal for funding GGA pathfinder projects.
- 5.10 In addition to the economic foundations, a £70m investment in recycling was announced, primarily funding improvements to collection infrastructure. Over the next year COSLA will also evaluate the Household Recycling Charter with a view to developing a future model of recycling collections.
- 5.11 In order to support Scotland's natural environment, £150m has been committed for forestry projects including the creation of 18,000 hectares of new forest per year by 2024; £150m for flood risk management; £20m in 20/21 for supporting peat bogs and also £3m for the Biodiversity Challenge Fund.
- 5.12 £500m has been committed to Active Travel over the next five years, channelled through local authorities. This links with health improvement, green infrastructure, tackling air pollution and creating desirable places to live, work and visit. There is also a commitment to engage with young people on the future of transport.

- 5.13 Active travel also links to the Scottish Government's promotion of the 20 minute neighbourhood where citizens are able to meet 'essential needs within a 20 minute walk' – not just focused on shops and other services, but also recognising that during lockdown there has been a renewed emphasis on the importance of equal access to good quality greenspace. Further detail will be included in the Review of the Town Centre Action Plan with a report due in November.
- 5.14 Another element of this ambition is the availability of high quality, green, affordable housing. In terms of social housing, the Programme for Government outlines enhanced standards for Scottish Government grant-funded homes for carbon, greenspace, homeworking space and digital connectivity. This will be detailed in the 'Housing to 2040' route map which will also be published later in the year.
- 5.15 In non-financial announcements relating to the climate emergency the Programme for Government also states the intention to hold a Citizens Assembly later this year, to develop community led regional hubs and also create 'Climate Action Towns'.

6. Programme of work

- 6.1 Outlined in the appendix are the actions agreed by the Council in February 2020. It is proposed that the Climate Change sub-committee work to establish the current position against each of these actions.
- 6.2 Linked to this, it is proposed that members consider what actions should be prioritised, particularly in light of the constraints due to local and national restrictions and also officer capacity due to supporting the Council's activities relating to the pandemic.
- 6.3 It is suggested that members may wish to prioritise the following areas of activity:
- Take steps to ensure the Council is in a strong position to maximise opportunities for funding including those outlined in the Programme for Government including around the economy, transport, housing and active travel.
 - Linked to this, develop a draft Adaptation Plan for the Council, underpinned by Renfrewshire's recovery plans.
 - Develop methods to allow full, meaningful and safe engagement with Renfrewshire's communities, such as via a digital Citizen's Assembly or other focus groups and forums
- 6.4 In addition, to support the development of Renfrewshire's Social Renewal Plan, a Community Impact Assessment will be carried out – a programme of engagement to understand what the pandemic has meant for Renfrewshire's people. Early elements of this include a survey via the Public Services Panel and a programme of 'listening events' with communities, both of which will primarily focus on the pandemic experiences, will likely include reflections on the societal and behavioural changes outlined in paragraph 4.3, which may be of interest to members of the Climate Change Sub-Committee.
- 6.5 Subject to further discussion and agreement by the sub-committee, officers will report back to the next meeting on the progress that has been achieved in terms of the priorities identified in section 6.

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

Author: Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Commissioning. Email laura.mcintyre@renfrewshire.gov.uk

Appendix 1 :Climate Emergency Action Plan (agreed by Council in February 2020)

Activity
ENERGY
Work with national and local partners to explore alternative energy options for Council buildings such as solar panels, battery storage, energy from waste and district heating, ensuring the Council has robust business cases in place ready to attract significant levels of national funding.
Implement pilot initiative to turn 75 local homes into low energy homes and develop investment proposals to reduce carbon across the Council's housing stock.
Review the lifecycle replacement programme for Council buildings to consider how changes to current specifications could improve energy efficiency, piloting innovative materials and developing business cases to roll these out where appropriate.
WASTE
Work with staff and communities to maximise opportunities to reduce unnecessary single use plastic use within the organisation and throughout Renfrewshire.
Continue to promote recycling awareness and availability of recycling facilities across Council buildings including schools and consider opportunities in relation to the reduction of food waste.
Develop options for the promotion of the circular economy in Renfrewshire, which could provide opportunities to reuse and recycle surplus or end of life items.
TRANSPORT
Work with partners at a local, City Region and national level to consider low carbon integrated transport solutions – trains, buses, cycling and walking and the uptake of electric vehicles.
Promote the use of low carbon travel within the Council's workforce through the provision of electric pool vehicles and cycle to work schemes.
Develop an electric vehicle plan for Renfrewshire, targeting opportunities to lever in additional funding to secure EV infrastructure, such as charging points, equipment and fleet.
Consider approaches being rolled out across other local authorities in relation to the promotion of better air quality, including the development of low emissions zones, which are also aiming to improve public health
ENGAGEMENT
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.
Engage at a regional and national level with other local authorities and agencies on these issues, including in relation to the delivery of the COP 26 event in November 2020.
PLACE
Put climate change at the heart of the new Economic Strategy and Skills Plan, working with businesses to lead by example and to demonstrate real change.
Use effective spatial planning to address climate change in line with legislation, the National Planning Framework and associated guidance, with a focus on adapting to and mitigating the impact of climate change through the planning process.
Develop a Carbon Offset Plan for the Council, clearly articulating opportunities for activities such as additional tree planting and carbon sinks such as peat bogs and utilising Renfrewshire's rich biodiversity across areas such as Clyde Muirshiel.
Consider proposals to introduce wildflower areas in Renfrewshire, and engage with local communities on initiatives which promote the awareness and use of green space.
GOVERNANCE / INNOVATION
Develop a Carbon Budget for Renfrewshire with community planning partners, gaining agreement on shared responsibilities and actions, recognising the presence of an international airport within

the local authority area.
Establish a new partnership forum to drive Renfrewshire-wide change on climate
Use the Council's sustainable procurement duties to consider all opportunities to reduce or offset carbon, including where possible through community benefits.
Develop a detailed adaptation plan for climate change, and ensuring the organisation has the capacity, skills and expertise to deliver a programme of work which will attract external investment/funding wherever possible.
Engage with industry and with academic institutions to develop possible opportunities to pilot new/emerging technologies in Renfrewshire.