

Agenda Item	21
Report No	HC/59/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Date: 31st October 2019

Report Title: Draft Terms of Reference – Climate Change Panel

Report By: Executive Chief Officer, Environment & Development

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report presents the draft terms of reference for the Climate Change Panel.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Discuss and agree the Terms of Reference for the Climate Change Panel.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource - There are no resource implications arising from this report. However, it should be recognised that facilitating the successful function of the Climate Change Panel, providing regular update reports and undertaking additional workstreams arising from requests from the Panel will necessarily have resource implications for the Climate Change and wider Environment team.

3.2 Legal - The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 places a legal duty on the Council to support national efforts to tackle climate change. The Climate Change Panel will have a critical role in scrutinising the Council's performance in this regard.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – There are no community implications arising from this report.

3.4 Climate Change/Carbon CLEVER – There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report. However, in undertaking the functions set out in the Terms of Reference, the Climate Change Panel will be positively contributing to reducing the Council's climate change impacts.

- 3.5 Risk – Given increasing public awareness of the issues around the climate and ecological emergency, there is a reputational risk to the Council around not being seen to be delivering climate and ecological action at sufficient pace.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. Background

- 4.1 At a meeting of The Highland Council on 9th May, 2019, it was agreed that the Council should establish a Climate Change Panel, which would have responsibility for oversight of climate change work across the Council, make recommendations around new climate change targets and to consult Highland communities around our approach to tackling the climate emergency.
- 4.2 This paper presents a draft Terms of Reference document for the Climate Change Panel, setting out the scope of its functions, frequency of meetings, chair etc.

5. Overview

- 5.1 The Terms of Reference, which can be found at **Appendix 1**, have been framed in a way to provide Members of the Climate Change Panel with a clear understanding of their role in moving forward the climate change agenda at The Highland Council.
- 5.2 The Terms of Reference will allow the Climate Change Panel to help accelerate action and understanding within the Council in respect of the climate and ecological emergency, as well as to make recommendations to Council and strategic committees around more demanding targets whilst identifying and proposing solutions around the key barriers to progress.
- 5.3 Following a meeting of the Climate Change Panel on 17th October, 2019, the draft Terms of Reference have been approved by Members of the Panel. Members are therefore asked to formally approve the Terms of Reference.
- 5.4 A more detailed update on an action plan to tackle the climate and ecological emergency and resourcing will be brought to Council in December 2019. In the interim, a session will be organised for the Executive Leadership Team to update senior management on existing workstreams, discuss the benefits of taking more action to meaningfully tackle the climate and ecological emergency whilst examining some of the key barriers

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Environment & Development

Date: 15th October 2019

Author: Keith Masson

Appendix 1

Climate Change Panel

DRAFT Terms of Reference

Purpose & Authority of the Climate Change Panel

The Climate Change Panel (CCP) exists as a consultative forum, to provide advice and directional guidance on the climate, ecological and environmental sustainability agenda across The Highland Council's estate, including its schools, non-domestic properties, services, and other areas within its realm of wider influence, and to support efforts to reduce emissions across the wider Highland area. This includes the following specific functions:

1. To support and champion Highland's high-quality environment, biodiversity, air, land, water, food products and renewable energy resources to bring appropriate commercial opportunities, maximise income whilst raising awareness of the need to protect and enhance our critical environmental assets.
2. To be updated on the legislative, regulatory, policy and practice issues in relation to climate change, sustainability and biodiversity issues which impact The Highland Council, by Council officers and key partners.
3. To consider the development of a revised Carbon CLEVER vision for climate and ecological action that moves the Council's agenda beyond risk-based compliance towards a more truly low-carbon Council.
4. To propose new actions to achieve net zero by 2025, drawing out budgetary and other resource implications for the Council and wider Highland region.
5. To receive, scrutinise and comment on a new Climate Change Plan for The Highland Council.
6. To receive, scrutinise and comment on a new Energy Strategy & Action Plan for The Highland Council.
7. To scrutinise and comment on the work being progressed under the respective remits of the Energy & Renewables and Staff Travel Project Boards.
8. To consider and comment on responses to the Scottish Government and other relevant bodies regarding climate and ecological issues, including statutory reporting under Scotland's Public Bodies Climate Change Duties.
9. To consider how best to promote awareness of the need for climate and ecological action within the Council and amongst partner organisations including Community Planning Partners, the Highland Environment Forum, and where appropriate, the wider community in Highland.
10. To identify, support and champion climate and ecological progress across the Council whilst providing an appropriate level of critical challenge for the organisation.
11. To take evidence and consider specific Highland issues, for example, electrical grid constraints, which impact the Council's low carbon ambitions.
12. To consider and make recommendations to The Highland Council and / or any other appropriate strategic committee in relation to these matters, including any proposed changes or developments to Highland Council policy & strategy.

Membership

Membership of the CCP will be agreed by The Highland Council. The CCP has the authority to make decisions only according to these terms of reference.

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings of the CCP will normally be held every 6 weeks. The Chair may request additional meetings if they consider this to be appropriate.

Formal minutes will be taken at each meeting and reported as an agenda item at the next suitable meeting of The Highland Council.

Quorum

Meetings of the CCP will be quorate if attended by the Chair / Vice-Chair and an additional four members of the CCP.

Chair

The Chair of the CCP will be Cllr Trish Robertson.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Panel** held in Committee Room 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 17 October 2019 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr B Boyd
Mr J Bruce
Mrs I Campbell
Mrs M Davidson
Mr C Fraser
Mr J Gray
Mr T Heggie

Mr D Louden
Mr A MacInnes
Mrs A MacLean
Mr D Rixson
Mrs T Robertson
Mr B Thompson (v/c)

Non-Member also present:

Mr J Gordon.

Officials in Attendance:

Mr S Black, Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy
Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager
Mr K Masson, Climate Change Officer
Ms A Myeshkova, EV Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator
Mrs O Bayon, Administrative Assistant

Also in attendance:

Mr A Prentice, Managing Director Practically Green

Preliminaries

Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator welcomed everybody to the first official meeting of Climate Change Panel and chaired the meeting until a Chair was appointed.

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Finlayson, Mr S Mackie, Mr MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, and Mr R MacWilliam.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Appointment of Chair

It was **AGREED**, having been duly proposed and seconded, that Mrs T Robertson be appointed Chairman of the Climate Change Panel.

4. Draft Terms of Reference – Climate Change Panel

There had been circulated Report No. CCP/1/19 dated 4 October 2019 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure setting out a draft Terms of Reference for the Climate Change Panel (CCP).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the CCP consisted of Members who had a genuine interest in the subject and it was important to capitalise on this whenever possible;
- it was likely in the future that the CCP would need to form sub groups to consider specific pieces of work and that it might be necessary to buy in expertise;
- a statement at the start of the Terms of Reference should emphasise that the Highland Council was leading carbon reduction and collating the work being done by its Community Planning Partners;
- the importance of biodiversity and carbon compensation and off-setting needed more prominence;
- the climate, ecological and environmental elements needed to be taken into account by the Highland Council in its role as landlord and when considering the development of council housing and heating networks;
- paragraph 12, “to support and champion Highland’s high quality environment, air, land, water, food products and renewable energy resources to bring appropriate commercial opportunities, maximise income whilst raising awareness of the need to protect and enhance our critical environmental assets”, needed to have greater emphasis and it was suggested that it should be moved to the top of the list; and
- the Terms of Reference used phraseology such as “consider and “scrutinise” and the CCP needed to be more ambitious in its outlook.

In response, Members were assured that reports on areas of specific interest could be brought to the CCP for discussion and reference was made to the workstream already underway looking at Council housing. There had, however, to be a degree of flexibility and a recognition that there was a lack of internal resources to deliver many of the aims that the CCP might aspire to.

Thereafter, the CCP **AGREED** that, taking into account the points raised during discussion, a revised Terms of Reference be circulated to the Panel with a final version being approved at the Highland Council at its meeting on 31 October 2019.

5. Presentation – Working Towards 2025 - A Carbon Baseline for Highland

A brief presentation from Mr Archie Prentice was provided giving an overview of Achieving Emission Reduction in the Highlands, with focus on the carbon footprint of the City of Inverness, including Domestic, Commercial and Transport Emissions in the Wider Highlands.

During the presentation, the importance of maintaining the integrity of our Peat land and Forestry Plantation Region was stressed, as they are pivotal in the storage contribution of carbon. Concerns were raised about Electric Vehicles (EV) Charge Point management and the availability for use.

There had also been circulated Report No. CCP/2/19 dated 4 October 2019 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the importance of a timely Highland region carbon assessment was highlighted, including having adequate resource to undertake the carbon assessment, or an associated cost if works were outsourced;
- attention was drawn for the need to capture all sources of green houses gases in the assessment;
- it was suggested that, travelling ferry foot passengers, have an option to pay a surcharge to assist in financing additional carbon reduction research;
- attention was also drawn to producing a suitable, sustainable and affordable policy for Highland with best use of resources;
- suggestion was made that the Carbon Baseline for highland assessment and process should include personal, public and commercial input to achieve zero carbon footprint;
- the Council could consider purchasing renewable energy only, although this might carry an additional cost; and
- reference was made to the importance of tree planting to offset carbon emissions, therefore grant funding for landowners would be essential in supporting this.

In addition, Members were invited to review the Forestry Plan provided by Forestry & Land Scotland. It was recommended that a representative of Forestry & Land Scotland attend the next meeting to share in discussions with. John Risby & Graeme Prest being suggested.

In response to queries, the Climate Change Officer confirmed the importance of establishing an appropriate baseline for Highland region to accurately develop strategy policy and further development. Members were thanked for their support.

The Panel **AGREED** that funding opportunities should be explored to allow a greenhouse gas inventory to be prepared for the whole Highland region.

6. Update on Scottish Government's Programme for Government – Response to the Climate Emergency

There had been circulated Report No. CCP/3/19 dated 4 October 2019 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- concern was raised regarding the anticipated speed of programmed work to Council buildings in the first year of the program;
- it was recognised that resource levels were currently low, and the importance in addressing this should be a matter of priority;
- information was sought on how the process could be accelerated if appropriate resource were available;
- focus should to be placed on the installation of electric charge points for vehicles;
- it was questioned if the Council should set the benchmark when constructing new buildings, e.g. schools, to the new net zero carbon standard; and
- concern was raised regarding construction of homes in certain rural locations being unable to meet the 2024 target for renewable or low carbon heating systems.

In answer to queries, it was confirmed that the scale of works would speed up during the coming months, especially as not all parts of the estate were suitable for Solar PV. It was also confirmed that Salix, an organisation that Highland Council had engaged to provide interest-free government funding to the public sector to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills were committed to a long-term partnership with the Council, and that a progress paper on Salix and other Solar PV work, including an update on EV charging point network installations be provided for the next CCP meeting. An update confirmed an EV Officer has been appointed to oversee electric charging point opportunities in rural Highland, working closely with Transport Scotland.

The Panel **NOTED** the contents of the report.

7. Annual Report under Public Bodies Climate Change Duties, 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No. CCP/4/19 dated 7 October 2019 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure.

Following a summary of the report, Members raised the following issues: -

- concern was raised over the Council's most energy inefficient buildings, with fans running in the summer period and additional heaters in the winter period. Therefore, consideration should be given to the Capital Program in terms of prioritising the council's least energy efficient buildings;
- it was suggested that Schools and school groups be included directly in climate change discussions;

- as Ofgem had appointed a new CEO, it was suggested an invitation be sent to invite representation to meet with the Panel;
- reference was made to the biomass emission factor statistics in terms of ensuring these were not double counted as part of the process; and
- attention was also drawn to the Council's grey fleet mileage statistics, and they fuel type that should be included when claims were submitted.

Following further discussions, it was confirmed that the Council had agreed to close certain office's over the Christmas/New Year period to aid reduction of energy consumption. On that basis it was now proposed that, as part of a staff energy awareness initiative, the Council would participate in a 'Power Hour' whereby on a Friday afternoon all non-essential equipment be switched off to save on energy consumption. It was also confirmed that the emissions factor statistics would be analysed to ensure no double counting of the data.

The Panel **NOTED** the draft the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties submission for the 2018/19 reporting year.

8. Current Workstreams

A verbal update on Current Workstreams was provided at the meeting, and the following points were discussed: -

- there has been a reduction in grey fleet business miles, and car hire miles due to the implementation of initiatives such as Skype for business, and Car Club travel. A concentration would now be focussed on the rationalisation of the Council's white fleet vehicles, i.e. vehicles under 3.5T;
- a continued focus on rural EV infrastructure to identify additional sites for charge points was confirmed;
- a competition for school pupils had been initiated regarding branding and logos for Council EV's to increase public awareness. Additionally, secondary schools had been invited to design charge point branding wraps, again to increase public awareness;
- an update on the River Ness hydro scheme was provided. It was confirmed that planning permission had been granted for the Archimedes screw installation to generate electricity, with screening in place to protect marine life;
- Council offices earmarked for Christmas/New Year closure would still be accessible for staff who required essential paperwork. It was confirmed that the heating would be set to frost protection to minimise the carbon footprint during this period;
- information was sought and provided, on the energy conservation hour, with confirmation that a pilot would commence before the Christmas break;
- it was explained that a gamification model would be initiated to encourage staff engagement with energy, waste and transport teams regarding decreasing consumption, with a launch anticipated in early 2020;

- the Council had a duty to prepare its Food Growing Strategy by 31 March 2020, and a consultant had been appointed to undertake this. The first workshop with officers was set for the 28 October 2019 and, thereafter, meetings and events would be held across Highland to prepare the strategy; and
- an updated report would be prepared for the next panel meeting on the Council's forestry strategy and direction was sought on how the Council could corporately manage land availability for communities to access for food growing and tree planting initiatives, timeously.

The Panel otherwise **NOTED** the position.

9. AOB

The Panel **AGREED** that a preliminary report on additional carbon offsetting opportunities, outlining future possibilities and options for consideration in Highland be considered at a future CCP meeting.

10. Exclusion of the Public

The Panel **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

11. Highland Adapts – Outline Business Case for a Highland-wide Approach to Climate Change Adaptation

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. CCP/5/19 dated 4 October 2019 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure.

Members **NOTED** the contents of the report.

The Panel **AGREED** that the next meeting be held in 6 weeks' time, the date of which would be confirmed and circulated to the Panel.

The meeting ended at 12:45pm.