

Agenda Item	6
Report No	CCWG/2/21

## The Highland Council

**Committee:** Climate Change Working Group

**Date:** 29 January 2021

**Report Title:** Climate Change & Energy Team - Strategic Control Plan Development

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure & Environment

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the development of a Strategic Control Plan (SCP); a strategic piece of work setting out a new approach towards the vision, internal structure and funding bids associated with the Climate Change & Energy Team.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to discuss and note the contents of this report.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – The EV Project Manager from the Climate Change & Energy Team (CCET) and a Project Manager from the Transformation Team were assigned part-time to assist with the development of the SCP, to help clarify the role of the Climate Change & Energy Team in working towards the Council's net zero ambitions, assist programme delivery and secure funding.

Phase 2 of this work will be undertaken by the Climate Change & Energy Team Manager in collaboration with the wider CCET team and across Council services to establish key objectives, projects, initiatives and associated KPIs. This is a vital piece of work to clearly establish a Council-wide understanding of the role of the team and where it can best assist other services in their individual decarbonisation efforts.

- 3.2 Legal – There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – There is no requirement or need to communicate the SCP development to communities, but as funding opportunities are identified and secured, the proposed programme will be communicated on a project by project basis as appropriate.
- 3.4 Climate Change/Carbon CLEVER – It is imperative, more so now during a financially challenging period, that the Council maximises external funding to enable the delivery of low carbon projects to aid our climate change targets. It is envisaged that the SCP and

approach taken can be rolled out across key focus areas related to the climate change agenda across Council services, therefore supporting our strategic aspirations and further reducing the organisation's emissions.

- 3.5 Risk – Failure to proactively address identified issues to improve performance and co-ordinate funding bids as part of a cohesive programme will result in a failure to realise the vision which has been established in the development of the SCP – this in turn will negatively impact the organisation's reputation and make it challenging to attract essential external funds in the future.
- 3.6 Gaelic – There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

#### **4. Climate Change & Energy Team - Background**

- 4.1 The Scottish government has pledged to end Scotland's contribution to climate change no later than 2045. All public bodies have a duty to support and work towards this target under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, as amended by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.
- 4.2 At a meeting of The Highland Council on 9th May 2019, following a motion brought by the Leader of the Council, Cllr Margaret Davidson, Members agreed that the Council declare a climate and ecological emergency, whilst recommitting to achieving a carbon neutral Highland by 2025.
- 4.3 The Highland Council has been actively managing its corporate carbon footprint for several years, with various teams from across the organisation contributing to a suite of projects and initiatives that has seen our corporate emissions fall from 67,000tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2011/12 to 40,000tCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2019/20 – a reduction of 40%.
- 4.4 The Council's use of energy across its built estate (consumption of electricity, gas, oil and biomass) accounts for 76% of its total carbon footprint, with associated costs of around £12m per annum.
- 4.5 Given the significant contribution energy makes to the Council's corporate emissions, it was agreed that the Climate Change and Energy & Sustainability Teams should combine in 2020 in order to rationalise workstreams and develop a coordinated Council approach to achieve net zero corporate emissions.
- 4.6 Following the successful development of a Strategic Control Plan (SCP) for the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Programme, it was recognised that a similar approach would be beneficial to set out a vision for the new Climate Change & Energy Team (CCET), alongside the identification of particular focus areas, in order to clarify the team's role whilst putting the team on a stronger footing in respect of attracting external funds, to expedite the Council's shift towards net zero.
- 4.7 This paper outlines progress to date as well as the emerging vision for the team.

#### **5 The Case for Change**

- 5.1 The work undertaken to date with regards aligning the Council's programme with that of the Scottish Government around the climate change agenda, as well as discussions with funders, has made it clear that significant additional funding is going to be made available to support national climate ambition over the coming years.
- 5.2 This work, combined with project monitoring and lessons learned exercises, has also highlighted that the Council's track record of delivery (with regards to securing and delivering on funding proposals) has been mixed, and this has negatively impacted our reputation as a safe or trusted funding partner. This has been further compounded by a lack of a clear vision and forward planning; there have been instances where funding proposals were developed with little notice resulting in sub-standard submissions and

significant on-site challenges with delivery (due to proposals lacking the required level of robustness and detail).

- 5.3 Due to limited availability of capital funds, and the reality that significant levels of investment will be needed to achieve net zero emissions, it was recognised that these concerns needed to be resolved as a priority through a targeted piece of work to put the new CCET on a stronger footing, to ensure they can support the Council to attract essential external funding.
- 5.4 To assist with this, the development of an outline strategy and vision is being undertaken; this work will help inform funders and partners of our aspirations whilst clarifying how the team can support operational activities and improve alignment.
- 5.5 The energy transition away from fossil fuels towards renewables remains a priority area within the Scottish Government's current [Programme for Government](#) as well as the revised [Climate Change Plan](#). Given the Council's extensive estate, the challenging geography and land mass of the region, and the need to enable a green recovery from COVID-19, it is recognised that the CCET should be striving to secure more funds that support the delivery of improved low carbon infrastructure – to this end, setting out a clear vision and establishing a robust supporting governance structure to support the vision and control the processes is an essential first step.

## 6. Progress to Date

- 6.1 In November 2020, following the recruitment of the new Climate Change & Energy Team Manager, a project team was assembled to develop and produce a Strategic Control Plan (attached at **Appendix 1** to this report); a significant piece of strategic work which has sought to understand previous shortcomings and challenge past behaviours in order to enable a refreshed approach to be taken towards the team's role within the Council, the development of conceptual projects, and applications for funding.
- 6.2 The overarching aim of the Strategic Control Plan is the application of structure and control to the project development and funding bid process, with three pieces of interdependent work undertaken in developing the plan:
  - 1. **Vision:** a point of reference – something to substantiate our proposals and bids
  - 2. **Structure:** pragmatic governance with appropriate control, support and scrutiny (including performance management)
  - 3. **Funding:** shaping funding opportunities for the climate change and energy agendas through effective relationships and credible project proposals
- 6.3 The fundamentals of this new approach, in respect of the EV infrastructure programme, were reported to Members on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at the Green Recovery workshop, as well as to Members of the Climate Change Working Group on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Both reports were well received with a high level of interest and positive feedback.
- 6.4 The approach has also been shared with Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) as part of a peer review process. SSN are supportive of the approach being proposed, to the extent they will be developing a case study on the work to date to help inform and support other public sector partners.
- 6.5 From the outset, this process has been designed to be transferable across the climate change agenda; replicating this for other areas of work will further strengthen the overarching commitment to net zero and help in the development of a wider, cohesive strategy and associated action plan.

6.6 The Vision, Values and Focus Areas of the SCP are as follows -

### 6.7 Vision

Our vision is a point of reference, and will be included in application forms and project documents to build confidence with funders and delivery partners so that they are assured that The Highland Council has a clear direction of travel in respect of its CCET:

**We will influence and support positive change for the Highlands by progressing the Council's climate change agenda, striving to achieve net zero emissions through a targeted reduction in energy consumption and spend across our services, whilst also building our climate resilience.**

**Our ambition is for The Highland Council to become one of the most energy-efficient & climate-ready Councils in Scotland.**

We will strive to eradicate our reliance on fossil fuel energy sources across our retained estate whilst endeavouring to encourage and embed improved energy understanding and behaviours that will help achieve the Council's net zero target (yet to be agreed). We will do this by –

- Using insights, experience, reasoned arguments and evidence to inform policy development for both climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Becoming a centre of expertise for climate and energy support & advice for the Council.
- Developing a prioritised list of interventions, in collaboration with services, to maximise time-critical green funding opportunities using an existing evidence base i.e. Programme Alignment report.
- Building partnerships that deliver to help accelerate the wider Highland climate change agenda.
- Improving utilisation of data to proactively identify and address energy deficiencies and opportunities within our estate.
- Adopting a cross-service approach built on clear and consistent engagement designed to understand the needs and requirements of individual teams.
- Listening to communities and connecting them with our peer network to encourage positive outcomes.
- Planning for the future whilst delivering the right short-term interventions.
- Considering emerging technologies to ensure appropriate solutions are appraised as the sector and market evolves.

### 6.9 Values

Our values set out core beliefs that are shared and embraced across the whole Climate Change & Energy Team. They will be included in application forms and project documents to reflect the behaviours and considerations we promote that will help us achieve our vision.

**Influencing:** We will use our expertise and insights to identify and enable the implementation of improved working practices that deliver on the organisation's low carbon agenda and inspire others to adopt sustainable, positive changes.

**Professional:** We will deliver high standards and endeavour to provide a reliable and robust service underpinned by a commitment towards supporting others and delivering on our promises through continuous improvement and open communication.

**Passionate:** We will be a dedicated and enthusiastic team that will actively prioritise the outcome of key organisational objectives related to climate change.

**Pragmatic:** We will continue to support, enable and deliver practical and realistic solutions that will address Highland-specific challenges and demonstrate best value, whilst striving to ensure the Council is well placed to evolve alongside sector developments and advancements.

**Collaborative:** We will proactively work with services and partners to drive forward key initiatives that result in better low carbon outcomes for all and encourage improved partnership working and productive working relations.

## 6.10 Focus Areas

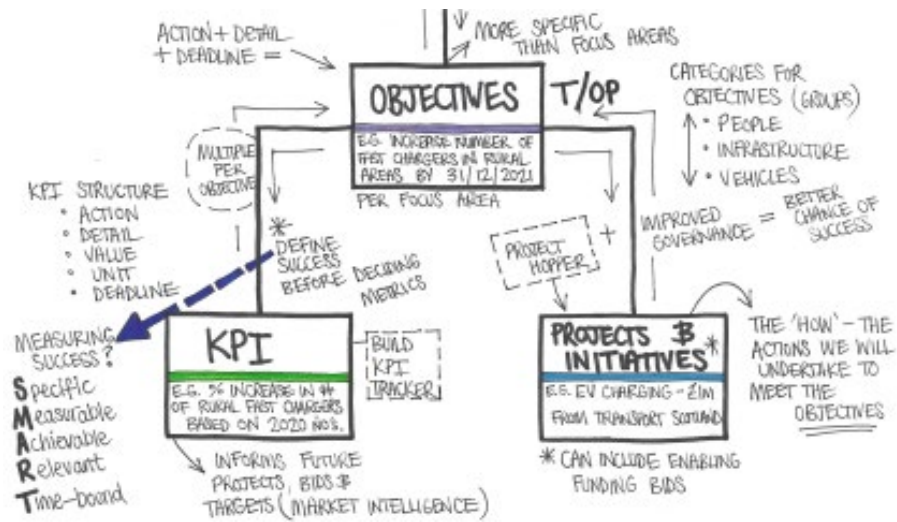
The Focus Areas are high level categories that the team will concentrate on. They will be included in application forms and project documents to provide insight into the targeted interventions and changes we want to make at a strategic level.



## 7. Key Next Steps

7.1 The Climate Change & Energy Team will now focus on translating the strategic vision, developed collaboratively amongst the team and senior service managers, into deliverable work packages through a series of workshops and sessions with operational managers and subject matter experts (SMEs). These sessions will focus on Stage 2 of the SCP development and will seek to agree the following –

- Objectives: high-level statements that outline what exactly we want to achieve and by when. Once completed, each objective will be replaced by a new objective, supporting a rolling programme approach and ensuring continued support of the vision.
- Projects & Initiatives: detail that will clearly articulate the actions we are taking to meet our stated objectives (this could be existing projects, proposed projects or funding bids).
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI's): measurable values that show the organisation's progress towards achieving our key business objectives.



7.2 This stage is absolutely crucial in aligning the programme; not only will it serve as a useful exercise to help collate and better coordinate activity and respective resource implications, it will also help identify any gaps in the SCP – where the operational ability to deliver isn't aligned with the desired vision, this will allow the project team to proactively address any issues.

**Designation: Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure & Environment**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

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## Climate Change & Energy Team – Strategic Control Plan

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### Vision, Values and Focus Areas

#### Vision

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- Listening to communities and connecting them with our peer network to encourage positive outcomes.
- Planning for the future whilst delivering the right short-term interventions.
- Considering emerging technologies to ensure appropriate solutions are appraised as the sector and market evolves.

Our vision is a point of reference. It will provide clarity on the team function and be used to help build strong working relations and give assurance that the Climate Change and Energy Team has a clear direction of travel.

#### Values

**Influencing:** We will use our expertise and insights to identify and enable the implementation of improved working practices that deliver on the organisation's low carbon agenda and inspire others to adopt sustainable, positive changes.

**Professional:** We will deliver high standards and endeavour to provide a reliable and robust service underpinned by a commitment towards supporting others and delivering on our promises through continuous improvement and open communication.

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**Collaborative:** We will proactively work with services and partners to drive forward key initiatives that result in better low carbon outcomes for all and encourage improved partnership working and productive working relations.

Our values set out core beliefs that are shared and embraced across the whole Climate Change & Energy Team. They will reflect the behaviours and considerations we promote that will help us achieve our vision.

### Focus Areas



The Focus Areas are high level categories that we will concentrate on. They will be used to identify, plan and progress targeted interventions and changes we want to make at a strategic level.