

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Waste Strategy Working Group** held remotely on Wednesday 1 September 2021 at 3.00pm.

Present:-

Mr J Bruce	Mr D Macpherson
Mr R Gale	Mr H Morrison
Mr A Henderson (Chair)	Mrs T Robertson

Non Members present:-

Mrs H Carmichael	Mr W Mackay
Mr D Mackay	

In attendance:-

Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Corporate Resource Service
Mr E Huc, Principal Waste Management Officer, Communities and Place
Mr A McKinnie, Waste Operations Manager, Communities and Place Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Long-term Solution for the Highland's Municipal Residual Waste – Options Appraisal

There had been circulated a confidential Report No WS/03/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place via the Members' SharePoint site.

To highlight the key points in the report, a presentation was made on the long-term solution for Highland region's municipal residual waste and the outcome of the options appraisal.

It was confirmed that Member briefings had been arranged to provide the same presentation ahead of the full Council meeting on 9 September 2021, to support the report on the medium term financial plan for that meeting at which Members would be requested to approve funding to engage a range of specialist expertise to explore further Option 3: Develop an Energy from Waste facility at the Longman to serve the Highlands.

Feedback on the report and the presentation was being sought from the Working Group prior to the wider Member briefings and full Council meeting.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the need to act quickly in considering the opportunities to produce hydrogen as part of this major infrastructure project for a range of uses including fuelling vehicles and selling on the open market;
- issues around the timeline in relation to the completion of new capital projects such as schools and the district heating infrastructure being in place;
- concern at the previous inability to conclude how to find a long term solution to municipal residual waste and potential costs arising as a result from Landfill Tax;
- the proposal would involve the next generation of new technologies that would not have been available previously and could deliver the right long-term solution for the Highlands while generating income for the Council, and reducing the burden of the landfill tax;
- clarification was sought and provided that the first step would be for the full Council to consider and agree the additional resource required to undertake the specialist work. Thereafter, and as this work progressed there would be key decision points for Members;
- clarification was sought and provided that a site search conducted in 2017 had concluded the Longman site was the only feasible location for this project. Identifying an alternative site could take a number of years which created further risk in terms of a solution to deal with residual municipal waste;
- the need for a continued focus on educating the public and businesses such as fast food outlets and supermarkets to recycle to significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfill;
- the officers involved in this project be thanked for the extensive amount of work undertaken on this project to date; and
- the importance of the full Council approving without delay the additional resource required to secure the specialist expertise in relation to Option 3, an Energy from Waste with Combined Heat and Power facility.

The Working Group **NOTED** the progress report, and the presentation to be provided to the wider Member briefings.

The meeting ended at 4.25pm.