

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 16 March at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)
Ms S Atkin
Mr J Bruce
Ms S Fanet
Mr D Fraser (remote)
Mr J Grafton

Mr P Logue (remote)
Mr D Louden
Mr R MacKintosh
Mr K Rosie (Chair)
Ms K Willis (Vice Chair)

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)
Mr C Ballance
Dr C Birt
Mr B Boyd
Mr R Gale (remote)

Mr K Gowans (remote)
Ms E Knox (remote)
Ms K MacLean (remote)
Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr P Oldham (remote)

Officials in Attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Interim Chief Executive
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change and Energy Team Manager
Ms F Daschofsky, Project Manager, Climate Change and Energy Team
Mr R Macdonald, Energy Manager
Ms K Andrews, Climate Change Coordinator
Ms R Burbaite, Climate Change Coordinator
Ms R Clarke, Climate Change Coordinator
Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr K Rosie in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Interim Chief Executive provided a verbal update regarding the Carbon Emissions Land Tax, which had been the subject of a Motion to Full Council on 9 March where it had been agreed that a report would be brought to the Climate Change Committee to enable a fully informed recommendation by the Full Council.

Following investigation as to the urgency of such a report, it had been confirmed that the Bill was likely to be introduced to Parliament around October 2023 which provided time for officers to research the matter and present a detailed report to the next meeting of the Committee on 17 May 2023. Consideration was also being given to an accompanying presentation to provide some broader context. The Committee's recommendations would then be considered by the Full Council prior to the summer recess.

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell, Mrs P Munro and Ms M Nolan.

**2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. Net Zero Strategy and Members Workshops
Ro-innleachd Neoni Lom agus Bùithtean-obrach Bhall**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/1/23 dated 1 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

In introducing the report, the Project Manager, Climate Change and Energy Team, drew attention to the timeline set out in section 7.1 of the report, adding that, following consideration by the Climate Change Committee on 17 May 2023, the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan would be presented to Full Council on 29 June for ratification.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Members thanked officers for the important report and welcomed the reports by Audit Scotland and the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee being brought to the Committee's attention;
- the challenges ahead were immense and there was a long way to go in terms of embedding climate action across Council services;
- thanks were expressed for the effort that had gone into the Members' workshops that had taken place and it was proposed that a further workshop be held in late August/early September to provide insight into and involvement in the development of the costed Action Plan. It was hoped there would be greater engagement going forward, and it would be helpful if those who had attended workshops could encourage their fellow Members to take part in future sessions;
- the public needed to understand and buy in to the work the Council was doing to meet Net Zero Targets and the need for clear, simple communication was emphasised. It was added that there could be a role for schools in terms of communicating what had happened in their local area and applying pressure if progress had not been made;
- it was necessary to speed up the pace of change and it was suggested that consideration be given to a streamlined process for measures that were easy to implement such as solar arrays, which saved carbon and money; and
- it was important, when discussing issues surrounding climate change, to not just focus on carbon emissions but to emphasise the opportunities associated with renewable energy in terms of tackling rural poverty.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress to date and the timeline for developing a Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan for The Highland Council;
- ii. **NOTED** the recommendations set out by the Accounts Commission in the Audit Scotland report on 'Scotland's Councils' Approach to Addressing Climate Change' as set out in Appendix 3 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee report and the summary of its recommendations on 'the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland' as set out in Appendix 4 of the report; and
- iv. **AGREED** that an additional Members' workshop be held in late August/early September to provide insight into and involvement in the development of the costed Action Plan.

4. **Energy Benchmarking of Property Estate A' Tomhas-mheasadh Lùth na h-Oighreachd Seilbhe**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/2/23 dated 6 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the Wick Campus as operating costs were high especially as it was a relatively new building, although carbon emissions were below the benchmark figure. In this regard it was queried how the running costs compared to all the previous sites it had replaced. It was confirmed that additional information would be provided to Members;
- information was also sought regarding Lochaber High School as feedback indicated the school had no control over the heating and ventilation of its classrooms, as it was being operated from an Inverness location;
- an explanation was sought regarding how data was gathered for sites such as landfill, cemeteries, piers and harbours;
- it was queried if it was felt there were sufficient resources to meet the Benchmarking Exercise target deadline of October 2023;
- it was felt that the current school rationalisation process was quite slow and if local government were to be empowered this would speed up the process;
- it was recognised that required energy efficiency works at schools, such as Fortrose Academy, would be an enormous challenge;
- whilst the Benchmarking Exercise deadline was October 2023, it was confirmed that identified reasonable interim works could go ahead in the meantime to assist schools;
- reference was made to wind turbines and if this process had been looked at across the estate for decarbonisation. In this regard it was confirmed that further reports would be presented to Committee outlining potential micro-renewables programmes for the schools estate; and
- as Kinlochbervie High School appeared to be performing well on energy efficiency, it was queried if there were lessons to be learned from this and applied at other schools.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the resultant analysis and assessment;

- ii. **APPROVED** the continuation of the exercise and update with 2022/23 data; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the distribution/awareness of the associated information deliverables, including the public facing Council website.

5. Annual Report under Public Bodies Climate Change Duties, 2021/22
Aithisg Bhliadhnaid fo Dhleastanasan Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde nam Buidhnean Poblach 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No CCC/3/23 dated 6 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- it was questioned if and how carbon emission reductions could be sped up to maintain and capitalise on the good progress made so far;
- it was confirmed that a detailed carbon emissions scope document was being worked on which took into account scopes 1 – 3 carbon emissions; and
- it was queried if previous strategies covering the period from 2013-2020 would be incorporated into the net zero strategy.

The Committee **NOTED** the Highland Council's return submitted for reporting year 2021-22 under the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties.

6. Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu Ro-innleachd Èifeachdais Teasa is Lùtha Ionadail

There had been circulated Report No CCC/4/23 dated 6 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- it was recognised that to deliver the Local Heat & Energy Strategy skilled persons would be required. However, concern was raised that there was a shortage of skilled workers in this field. It was therefore questioned if there was a strategy to deal with this issue;
- Members were keen to see the maps of conservation areas and listed buildings updated in due course; and
- it was confirmed that officers would be part of the group to enable Highland-based construction companies, including sole traders, to bid for renewable insulation contracts, including training for renewable insulation.

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

7. Fleet Decarbonisation - E-cargo Bike Pilot Scheme
Dì-charbonachadh Cabhlaich – Sgeama Pileatach Bhaidhcean E-cargo

There had been circulated Report No CCC/5/23 dated 6 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Members expressed thanks for the report and welcomed a pilot E-cargo bike scheme being made available to Fort William;
- information was sought, and provided, on the next steps at the conclusion of the pilot and what the evaluation process would be to determine the scheme's success. In this regard it was confirmed that E-cargo bikes would be beneficial in areas such as reducing carbon emissions, allowing more flexibility for short duration journeys and contributing to staff health and wellbeing; and
- if the scheme was deemed a success, Highland Council should purchase their own E-cargo bikes immediately when the pilot bikes were returned to Sustrans to avoid any delay in the transition process;

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the principles of the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and how E-cargo bikes could offer low emission business travel and reduce fleet emissions;
- ii. the progress to date on development of this scheme; and
- iii. the next steps for establishing the 12-month pilot scheme.

8. Heating Policy for Non-Domestic Estate Poileasaidh Teasachaidh airson na h-Oighreachd Neo-dhachaigheil

There had been circulated Report No CCC/6/23 dated 6 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- it was queried how the Heating Policy would be delivered, monitored and revised to ensure its success;
- in response to a specific query, it was confirmed that the Heating Policy would clearly establish how heating systems should be controlled. In addition, the Facilities Management Service had trained staff to make limited adjustments to heating levels within schools; and
- it was confirmed that the Heating Policy would have a positive impact on energy performance and help reduce costs.

The Committee **NOTED** and supported the proposed initiative.

9. Climate Change Adaptation Freagarrachadh Atharrachadh na Gnàth-shìde

There had been circulated Report No CCC/7/23 dated 7 March 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- thanks were conveyed to the officers for their hard work which had been undertaken in this Committee, despite the challenges that lay ahead;
- Members were encouraged to attend the workshop on Monday 20 March 2023 and take part in the discussions;
- it was queried if procurement in this context would incorporate adaptation, climate change and community benefit, rather than just best financial value.

- In this regard, it was confirmed that the Highland Council could add weighting when evaluating a contract to get the best out of the procurement process; and
- Members were reminded that the next Climate Change Committee was scheduled for the 17 May 2023.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the paper; and
- ii. **AGREED** the recommended next steps in section 7 of the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm.