
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Agenda Item 10

11 May 2009

Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Scotland's Climate Change Declaration

Purpose: To inform the Committee of progress against the commitments made in the Climate Change Declaration.

Recommendation: That the Committee (a) notes the progress against the commitments in Scotland's Climate Change Declaration; and (b) agrees to receive an annual report on this.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2006, the Scottish Executive published "Changing our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme", which outlined its policy on tackling climate change in Scotland. It is acknowledged that this is a global problem and that Scotland is a small country, contributing less harmful emissions to the worldwide problem than many other developed countries. On balance, however, each person in Scotland contributes twice the global average. The Scottish Executive therefore considered that Scotland had a responsibility to help tackle climate change.
- 1.2 Subsequent to that, the Scottish Executive drew up a "Scottish Climate Change Declaration" which it sought all local authorities in Scotland to sign-up to. The Council Leader and the Chief Executive signed the Declaration on 18 January 2007. All 32 local authorities in Scotland did in fact sign-up to the Declaration. The first annual report on progress against the commitments in the Climate Change Declaration was submitted to the Executive of the Council on 24 June 2008.
- 1.3 An updated Declaration was provided to the Council in 2008 to reflect the change from Scottish Executive to Scottish Government. It was also renamed "Scotland's Climate Change Declaration". The wording of the Declaration, however, remained the same. The new Declaration was re-signed by the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and John Swinney, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on 15 July 2008.
- 1.4 In essence, it acknowledges that local authorities accept that climate change is occurring and it commits local authorities to take action to both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- 1.5 The UK Government through the UK Climate Change Act has set a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050. The Scottish Government has also introduced a Climate Change Bill which is progressing through the Parliament at the moment and includes a statutory target to reduce Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050; an interim target of 50% emissions reduction by 2030; and a framework of annual targets.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 The Council has made progress in meeting its commitments in the Climate Change Declaration in year 2008/09 as follows:-

- (i) Work with the Scottish Government and the UK Government to contribute to the delivery of Scotland's and the UK's Climate Change Programmes, including to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to future climate change scenarios.**

Councillor Margie Currie is the Council's representative on the COSLA Regeneration and Sustainable Development Group. The Chief Executive of the Council leads the SOLACE Environmental Group. Both groups have climate change as a core remit.

- (ii) Produce and publicly declare a plan, with targets and timescales, to achieve a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from our own operations. This will include our energy use and sourcing, travel and transportation, waste production and disposal, estate management, procurement of goods and services, and improved staff awareness.**

The Council has drawn up a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan which includes actions to achieve a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, including emissions from the sources mentioned above. The Plan has been in operation for 2 years and over that period has delivered savings in excess of our stated targets of 981 tonnes of CO₂ measured against our revised 2005/06 baseline. This target would represent a saving of approximately 4,038 tonnes from our estimated emissions had the Plan not been implemented. The Executive takes direct responsibility for ensuring the Plan is being fully implemented.

- (iv) Ensure that greenhouse gas reduction and climate change adaptation measures are clearly incorporated into our new and existing strategies, plans and programmes, in line with sustainable development principles.**

The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and the current Local Plans seek to mitigate the effects of climate change through their spatial policies by focusing development on transport corridors. Their policies on renewable energy will also make a positive contribution.

The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Biannual Monitoring Report has a section on climate change covering reducing CO₂ emissions; conserving natural resources; facilitating renewable energy; and reducing waste streams and encouraging recycling.

Scottish Planning Policy 6 (Renewable Energy) provides for local plans to formulate policies on the provision of low carbon and renewable sources of energy. This will be taken into account, along with all other planning policy advice, in the preparation of the new Local Development Plan, which has recently commenced. There will also be a robust strategic environmental assessment of the Local Development Plan. The scoping report was sent to the SEA Gateway following the Local Development Plan Committee on 16 March 2009.

All Council Plans, policies and strategies are monitored to ensure that, where necessary, they have been subject to a statutory Strategic Environmental Assessment that describes the potential impact on the environment of their implementation.

The Development Management Service will take account of established policy in determining planning applications and will have regard to the benefits of any development proposals for eco housing, etc, although this would not be the only material consideration.

The Council is a member of the Ayrshire Biodiversity Management Group which is responsible for the Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan, which sets out priority habitats and species which require attention and actions required to protect them.

The Local Transport Strategy produced by the Council's Roads Service is largely about modal shift and encouragement of greater use of public transport, cycling and walking.

In Roads Maintenance, as the current trend is for a wetter, warmer climate, Roads have revised their transport requirements and are currently in the process of changing their fleet from vehicles that require specific snow clearing equipment, to that of multi purpose vehicles capable of dealing with a wide range of emergency situations.

The Council has approved a policy of alternate weekly domestic refuse collections in order to increase the amount of recycling and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill to avoid potential fines from the Scottish Government for failure to meet landfill diversion targets. The Council has met the 30% 2008 recycling target and is on course to meet the 40% target by 2010. The new alternate weekly blue bin scheme has been implemented in the Garnock Valley, Kilwinning, North Coast and Millport with the Three Towns having commenced on 13 April 2009 and the Irvine Area to follow in August 2009. To help promote the alternate weekly collection scheme an awareness campaign is taking place involving roadshows, school talks, adverts in the press and leaflets.

The majority of Council buildings now have some internal recycling collection for glass, cardboard and/or paper that will continue to expand in the future. Catering and Cleaning are looking at reducing packaging used within school kitchens. Also, Catering and Cleaning use local produce where possible, particularly on Arran.

The Grounds Maintenance Service has varied its work programme to allow for more grass cutting in the Autumn and less in mid Summer. There has also been an extension to the Garden Refuse Collection season to allow for the increased growth of grass in the Autumn and also Autumn pruning which has increased recycling figures.

(v) Assess the risks and opportunities for our services and our communities of predicted climate change scenarios and impacts, and take action to adapt accordingly and in line with sustainable development principles.

The Civil Contingency Act requires the Council to maintain Business Continuity Plans and plans have been, and continue to be, developed allowing the Council and its Services to respond and recover business processes with as minimal interruption to internal and external customers as possible.

Under Emergency Planning, there is a Flood Response Plan for North Ayrshire Council which is going to be reviewed by the end of the year with a view to producing a Joint Ayrshire Flood Response Plan. All other aspects of climate change will be covered by the Council's Civil Contingencies Plan.

The Council's Flood Prevention Works require to take into account likely conditions 40, 50 and 100 years ahead and all the Council schemes allow for sea level rises and increased rainfall in line with current predictions. The Saltcoats Flood Prevention Scheme is now complete. The Scheme addresses previous flooding and protects some 300 residential properties and 20 commercial properties from predicted increased risk of flooding in the future. The Council is also going to promote and consult in 2009 or early in 2010 on a Flood Prevention Scheme for the River Garnock upper catchment area.

(vi) Encourage and work with others in our local community to take action to adapt to the impact of climate change, to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions and to make public their commitment to action.

The Council through its own publications, publicity and website encourages the public to "reduce, reuse and recycle" and to become more energy efficient. There is an ongoing awareness raising campaign involving roadshows, adverts and leaflets on the alternate weekly collection scheme.

The Local Transport Strategy encourages modal shift and greater use of public transport, cycling and walking.

The Council approved a Staff Travel Plan in November 2008. The overall aim is to reduce single occupancy car usage by Council staff. The short term objectives are to increase walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing within 1 to 2 years. The medium to long term objectives are to green the fleet, review fleet procurement and service delivery, and reduce the environmental impact of business travel.

The Eco Schools Programme, which all primary, secondary, nurseries attached to primary schools, and special schools in North Ayrshire now participate in, raises awareness and encourages all pupils to participate in eco programmes, which can include recycling, energy efficiency, using organic products. Currently, in terms of the Eco Schools Award System, 2 schools have their third green flag (the green flag is the top award), 8 schools have their second green flag, 16 schools have their first green flag, 47 have the silver award and 58 have the bronze award.

The Cleansing Service's Litter Officer offers presentations on litter, dog fouling and fly tipping awareness in schools and to other interested parties. Cleansing provides equipment to aid schools and community litter picks.

(vii) Publish an Annual Statement on the monitoring and progress of our Climate Change Response, detailing targets set, actions taken, outcomes achieved and further actions required.

The Annual Statement is covered by this report. The Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan includes targets, actions taken, outcomes achieved and further actions required. The Single Outcome Agreement includes a section against the priority of Clean and Green and incorporates outcomes, targets set and outcomes achieved. The SOA Action Plan details actions planned for 2009/10 to achieve the outcomes. The SOA Action plan in relation to Clean and Green will be monitored by the Environment Strategic Partnership. There will also be regular reporting to that Partnership by the Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Group.

(viii) Collaborate with other organisations to promote good practice on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The Council works with organisations such as the Carbon Trust and Energy Saving Trust to learn from them and promote good practice. The Council produces a report on improvements in home energy efficiency every two years as required by the Home Energy Conservation Act.

Trading Standards has under the umbrella of the Local Energy Advice Forum brought together the main Council Services, local Housing Associations and voluntary agencies, including such groups as Age Concern, all working together with The Energy Saving Trust. Trading Standards has provided a single door approach to information and advice on all energy matters including the new measures under the energy assistance package which will come into force in April 2009. Our local advice surgeries have saved local consumers over £1/2m to date in reduced energy costs. A new Energy Information Pack produced by LEAF will provide all the latest help, guidance and assistance consumers will need with up to date information and full contact details. This will be distributed to all libraries and community centres across North Ayrshire with more local surgeries planned to ensure that the information and help that is available now will encourage reduced carbon emissions and energy costs especially for vulnerable individuals and groups in the community.

The Council in partnership with the Scottish Government (Warmer Homes Fund) and the Energy Agency is promoting a cavity wall and loft insulation discount scheme for householders within North Ayrshire.

The energy efficiency element of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard requires that all Council houses achieve minimum insulation standards by 2015. The Council is implementing a targeted programme to accelerate this and is on target to achieve the standards by 2015.

The Council is working in partnership with the Energy Agency to promote good practice through a series of features within our staff magazine.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee notes the considerable progress against the commitments in Scotland's Climate Change Declaration in year 2008/09. There will continue to be an Annual Statement monitoring progress on our climate change response.

4. Implications

- 4.1 As mentioned earlier in this report, the Scottish Government is progressing the Climate Change Bill through Parliament. This will include targets for reductions in carbon emissions. By reaffirming its commitment to the Climate Change Declaration and separately to the Carbon Management Plan, the Council has already gone some way towards making its carbon emission reductions. An outcome in relation to this has also been included in the Single Outcome Agreement, as well as actions within the SOA Action Plan.
- 4.2 There may be financial implications in terms of the actions required. These will require to be taken into account in the normal budget process.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with Infrastructure and Design Services, Environment and Related Services, Educational Services, and Legal and Protective Services.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 By signing up to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, the Council is supporting the policies of the UK and Scottish Governments to take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

IAN SNODGRASS
Chief Executive

Reference :

For further information please contact Sandra Bale, Policy Officer , on 01294 324135