

Midlothian Climate Change Strategy 2020**Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place****Report for Decision****1 Recommendations****1.1** It is recommended that Council:

- a) Approve the Climate Change Strategy 2020 and associated Action Plan (attached to this report);
- b) Instruct officers to publish the Climate Change Strategy on the Council's website,
- c) Note the Corporate Management Team have committed to resource a dedicated climate change member of staff in accordance with action number 1 in the Action Plan; and
- d) Agree to the establishment of a Climate Change Board to oversee the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

- 2.1** The purpose of this report is to present a proposed Climate Change Strategy to Council for approval and publication in response to the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency in December 2019. The strategy sets out a plan, including commitments and actions, to deliver the Council's aspiration of being carbon neutral by 2030. The strategy focuses on key themes including Energy Efficiency; Recycling & Waste; Sustainable Development; Sustainable Travel; Business Processes; Carbon Management; Governance & Management; and Risk.

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3 Background/Main Body of Report

- 3.1** The Council was an early signatory to the Scottish Governments Climate Change declaration in 2007. This was a voluntary agreement that committed the Council to working with the Scottish and UK Governments to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, taking steps to adapt to the impact of climate change, and working with communities on the issue.
- 3.2** The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 set the legislative framework for climate change in Scotland, including mandatory targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions up to 2050 to support the transition to a sustainable low carbon economy. The initial targets were reviewed and revised by the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 which now gives Scotland some of the most stringent statutory targets in the world.
- 3.3** In 2014 the Council prepared its first Climate Change Strategy – this strategy was subject to review in late 2019 following the 2019 Act. In December 2019 the Council declared its own Climate Emergency, agreeing to become net carbon zero across all aspects of its organisation by 2030. The Climate Change Strategy 2020 has been prepared following an internal consultation across Council services.

Midlothian Council Climate Change Emergency

- 3.4** In April 2019, following the UK Government's declaration, the Scottish Government declared a climate change emergency, bringing into sharp focus the scale of the problem and the urgency for action. In October 2019 new climate change legislation reset the 2009 Scottish Government's greenhouse gas emissions target from 80% by 2050 to net zero by 2045 with interim targets of at least 56% reduction in 2020, 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040. These new targets give Scotland some of the most stringent statutory targets in the world.
- 3.5** At its meeting on 17 December 2019, the Council considered a motion and agreed to declare its own climate change emergency recognising and reinforcing the urgency of taking immediate action. It commits the Council to an even more challenging target by making its own activities net zero carbon by 2030. In response the strategy sets out a clear vision and set of objectives, to highlight what we can, and must do to combat climate change and highlights some of the challenges to achieving this. It focuses on a number of themes including Energy Efficiency; Recycling & Waste; Sustainable Development; Sustainable Travel; Business Processes; Carbon Management; Governance & Management; and Risk. The themes provide a framework for action and contain a number of commitments - some reflecting existing strategies and plans and others promoting best practice. They complement the targeted actions of the Action Plan and include a commitment to:
 - Establish a Climate Change Citizens' Assembly;

- Raising awareness of climate change and promoting individual and collective action to combat it and make Midlothian "A Great, Green Place to Grow";
- Using green energy to heat and light our estate buildings, making them as energy efficient as possible;
- Increasing our recycling rates and reduce waste;
- Expanding our electric and ultra-low carbon vehicle fleet;
- Adopting the Passivhaus building standard and incorporating "green" and "blue" infrastructure as standard design principles for new development;
- Investigate the feasibility of Zero Carbon Development Zones;
- Delivering the Shawfair low carbon community heating system and investigating options to develop heat networks across the county;
- Accelerating development of the Midlothian Active Travel Network including cross-boundary connections for longer distance commuting and leisure routes; and
- Accelerating organisational change to extend home working and reduce the need to travel to work.

Next Steps

- 3.6** A copy of the Climate Change Strategy is attached to this report.
- 3.7** In the face of the UK Climate Change Committee's latest report (2019); the UK and Scottish Government's climate pledges and Midlothian's recent climate emergency declaration, it is imperative that an early start to implementing the strategy is made and momentum maintained. The strategy acknowledges that in many parts, delivering the strategy will require to be properly resourced. Key to this will be the appointment of a dedicated member of staff to promote and coordinate climate change activities across the Council.
- 3.8** In addition robust governance arrangements are required to ensure proper management of our climate change responsibilities and obligations. The establishment of a new Climate Change Board with appropriate manager representation (and reporting to CMT, Cabinet and Council) will ensure a degree of consistency and transparency of decision making and resource allocation needed to ensure we reach net carbon zero by 2030.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital, Risk and Equalities)

4.1 Resource

Preparation of the strategy has been managed within existing resources. However, in order to meet our commitment to achieving net-zero carbon status by 2030 and to successfully implement this strategy, the Council acknowledges the importance of allocating sufficient resources to this end. Not all the actions in the strategy or action plan will require or incur additional capital or revenue spend but this may be a significant issue going forward. Some of the actions and commitments are ongoing work streams that can, and will be consumed within the current budgets, particularly those actions which relate to procedural and behavioural change but it is considered

necessary to commit a dedicated staff resource to ensure that climate change activity is coordinated across the Council and that momentum is reached and maintained to the 2030 target date.

4.2 Digital

The strategy commits to adopting a “Digital by Default” approach as a key driver for future organisational change and transition to net zero carbon working practices. As such the appropriate corresponding computer hardware, software, online access and back office permissions will need to be in place in order to support staff working remotely.

4.3 Risk

The 2019 emissions reductions legislation along with the Government’s, the Council’s and other local authorities climate change emergency declarations (and target timescales), provide a clear signal of the need for immediate action by all parties if we are to contain global temperature increases to +1.5 degrees Celsius and be in a position to manage the impact of climate and adapt to the effects of climate change. If climate change accelerates, it will result in higher temperatures throughout the year (drier summers and wetter winters) and increased instances of more unpredictable and extreme weather conditions. The consequences will be increased disruption to the existing transport and infrastructure networks as well as potential damage to buildings. It will also increase the resources required to tackle climate change and will influence and possibly restrict the options available to the Council to manage and adapt to the impact of climate change.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities

The strategy is a corporate document and relevant to all services and employees. The Climate Change Strategy 2020 has been prepared following an internal consultation across Council services.

In its Climate Emergency declaration in December 2019, the Council announced its commitment to be net zero carbon by 2030. As part of this declaration it also signalled its intent to establish a Citizens Assembly and Climate Change Partnership Group. Together these forums will bring together individuals, community groups and business sectors from across Midlothian to discuss and contribute ideas and initiatives to tackle climate change. The current Single Midlothian Plan has incorporated the net zero carbon commitment as one of its four core priorities (Appendix A, paragraph A.1).

As identified above the Council's objective is to be as inclusive as possible and it intends to reach out to as many individuals, agencies and organisations as possible to ensure everyone who wants to engage in the climate change debate has a voice. The establishment of the Climate Change Board (and the regular review of the strategy) will provide an opportunity to incorporate and reflect the work of these

groups in future iterations of the strategy and will coordinate better integration across Council services.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background Information/Links

APPENDIX A – Additional Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Climate Change is one of the four core priorities of the current Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) and it includes a specific climate change outcome, namely:

“To be an ‘earth friendly’ partnership, resource aware and committed to working to support Scotland’s net zero carbon ambition by 2045 (2030 in Midlothian).”

Under the Sustainable Growth action plan the SMP identifies three actions:

- Establish a Climate Emergency group in the Midlothian Community Planning Partnership;
- Investigate a Sustainable Growth Agreement (SGA) between Midlothian Council and SEPA; and
- Investigate identifying tree coverage on community planning partners landholdings using appropriate software.

The Climate Emergency Group has been established and the remaining actions are included in the Climate Change Strategy.
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A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- ☒ Holistic Working
- ☐ Hub and Spoke
- ☒ Modern
- ☒ Sustainable
- ☐ Transformational
- ☒ Preventative
- ☒ Asset-based
- ☒ Continuous Improvement
- ☐ One size fits one
- ☐ None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- ☒ One Council Working with you, for you
- ☒ Preventative and Sustainable
- ☒ Efficient and Modern
- ☒ Innovative and Ambitious

A.4 Delivering Best Value

The strategy and associated Action Plan include a number of commitments which are aimed at mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change and cover a wide range of the Council's services, operations and assets. They cover, amongst other things energy efficiency, active travel, waste and recycling; planning policy and increased use of digital technology to support remote/home working. The Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will be central to the transition to a low carbon future.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The strategy was approved by CMT for internal consultation between 15 November 2019 and 10 January 2020. It was widely circulated to service managers, team leaders and officers across the Council with a request to share the strategy with colleagues who have an existing remit and/or interest in one or more of the strategy themes (energy efficiency; recycling and waste treatment; sustainable development; sustainable travel; and business processes).

The strategy includes a commitment to establish a Citizens Assembly which will bring together a cross section of individuals, community groups, business sectors from across Midlothian to discuss and contribute ideas and initiatives to tackle climate change. Regular reviews of the strategy and carbon management plan will provide an opportunity to incorporate and reflect the work of these groups in future iterations of the plans.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The strategy acknowledges that climate change will impact on the way the Council does business. The emergency response to the Covid19 pandemic has accelerated a transition to "digital by default" where a large proportion of the Council's workforce which can work from home, is working from home. This same change has benefits for the climate change agenda namely: reducing the need to travel, increasing walking and cycling activity; reducing carbon emissions and providing a better work life balance for employees.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The strategy and the proposed Carbon Management Plan are mechanisms which will identify, measure and monitor actions and initiatives designed to combat climate change. In addition the annual Public Bodies Climate Change reporting duty will act as a benchmark for progress and highlight areas where greater focus and effort is required. Mitigation and adaptation measures will be key in managing the transition to a low carbon economy and low carbon place.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Action on climate change is central to achieving sustainable development whether that is through personal choices and actions or

organisational change. Action on climate change takes place at a national level (legislation, Government policy, funding incentives etc.), a local level (local authority services and planning), community level (neighbourhood planning) and an individual level (personal choices and behaviour). The strategy outlines a number of commitments and actions which, taken together will help to combat climate change, assist in the transition to being net carbon zero by 2030 and make Midlothian a "Great, Green Place to Grow".

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links (if applicable)

**Midlothian Council Corporate Climate Change Strategy 2014 -
[https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/389/climate change strategy](https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/389/climate_change_strategy)**