

Report for the Scottish Ministers on Compliance with Climate Change Duties for 2015/16**Report by Ian Johnson, Head of Communities and Economy****1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee (PRSC) with responses to outstanding questions raised at its meeting of 29 November 2016 in response to the Committee's consideration of the Council's statement of Compliance with Climate Change Duties for 2015/16.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council's statement of Compliance with Climate Change Duties for 2015/16 was submitted to the Scottish Government on 24 November 2016 prior to the due date of 30 November 2016. A copy of the submission was reported to the PRSC for information and consideration. At its meeting of 29 November 2016 the PRSC requested clarification on a number of points, which are addressed in Section 3 of this report.

3 Clarification of Issues Raised by PRSCPage 53 – item 2 (b): Carbon Management Plan

- 3.1 PRSC raised concerns that they had not seen the Council's Carbon Management Plan (CMP).
- 3.2 The CMP 2013 – 2016 and associated carbon reduction measures were approved by Council at its meeting of 25 March 2014. The outcome of the plan and the Council's position at the conclusion of the plan was reported to Cabinet at its meeting of 11 October 2016. This report was not referred onto PRSC.
- 3.3 A new CMP is currently being prepared by the Head of Property & Facilities Management and will be presented to a future Council meeting.

Page 55 – item 2 (d): Viewing the Climate Change Strategy

- 3.4 PRSC asked if the Council's Climate Change Strategy can be made available online.
- 3.5 The Strategy will be made available online in the near future as part of a plan to have a wider 'Climate Change' presence on the Council's website.

Page 57 – item 2 (f): Drafting an Action Plan

- 3.6 PRSC raised concerns that a commitment to draft a Corporate Climate Change and Sustainable Development Action Plan had slipped from May 2016 to March 2017.
- 3.7 The timetable to draft an action plan has slipped as a consequence of other work pressures and as a consequence of the Planning Service review. However resources have been committed to drafting an action plan by 31 March 2017 as stated in the submission.

Page 62 – item 3 (d): Reduction of Carbon Emissions

- 3.8 PRSC asked if the stated level of carbon emission reductions is correct and over which period does it cover.
- 3.9 The Council's CMP sets a target of achieving a 25% (8,800 tonnes) reduction in its own Carbon emissions based on the 2006/7 Carbon output tonnage of 27,237CO_{2e}. The Council has exceeded its target and achieved a CO₂ emissions tonnage reduction of 31% (11,035 tonnes). The potential for confusion over the figures was explained in the original report to PRSC which stated:
- 3.10 *Greenhouse gas emissions covered by the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2013-2016 relate to its buildings and other estate, waste (the Council area's waste, not just the Council's 'own' waste), street lighting and fleet. At its meeting of 11 October 2016 Cabinet considered a report regarding the Council's Carbon Management Plan, which confirmed that the target to reduce overall emissions by 25% over the plan period had been exceeded (31.2%).*
- 3.11 *Corporate emissions for the purposes of the Council's statement are those covered by the Carbon Management Plan, excluding area waste emissions (the Council is currently unable to disaggregate data pertaining to its 'own' waste from Midlothian wide waste which it reports to government), but adding emissions from staff business travel ('grey fleet') (claimed for business miles only) and staff commuting. Applying this definition, table 3a shows that corporate emissions are estimated to have dropped by 8% from 2012/13 to 2015/16 and 16% from 2006/7 to 2015/16. These reductions do not take into account the significant emissions savings from the Council's management of the area's waste.*
- 3.10 The baseline year of 2012/13 stated in the submission at table 3 (d) reflects the commencement period of the CMP process. The baseline for measuring carbon emissions is 2006/7, as stated in the CMP, this is because this was the most up to date emissions data that was available at the time of drafting the CMP.

- 3.11 PRSC asked what the difference was between the carbon emission levels identified in tables 1A and table 1B.
- 3.12 Table 1A expresses the level of carbon emissions in Midlothian which can be influenced by Midlothian Council and its Partners whereas table 1B identifies the level of carbon emissions in Midlothian. The figures are very similar as it is considered that Midlothian Council and its Partners can influence the level of emissions in Midlothian. Table 1B shows a higher level of emissions than those shown in table 1A as they include activities and actions which are seen as outwith the control of Midlothian, such as regional transportation journeys (for example journeys on the Borders Railway).

Verification of the data

- 3.13 PRSC asked if the data could be verified for 2016/17.
- 3.14 There is the potential to consider having the 2016/17 data verified by a third party prior to its submission in November 2017. A decision will be made prior to submission after consideration is given to the cost of verification and the 'added value' the verification process would provide.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Resource

Future priorities highlighted in the proposed report can be met from existing resources.

4.2 Risk

Scottish Government guidance states that responsibility for compliance with the public bodies' climate change duties and reporting rest with the reporting organisation, which will run the risk of legal challenge or reputational damage if compliance cannot be demonstrated. Under the Act, Scottish Ministers may instruct investigations into compliance. The Scottish Government intends to assess reports on compliance to monitor progress.

4.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

4.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The impact of unchecked climate change would be significant, including detrimentally impacting economic growth, increasing the risk to properties and businesses from flooding and extreme weather, higher costs and a lower quality of life. The Low Carbon Scotland – Meeting Our Emissions Reductions Targets 2013-2027 (June 2013) report acknowledges that our economy's sustainability is dependent on a low carbon transition. Scotland's Economic Strategy (March 2015) acknowledges that in the decades to come, climate change will continue to be a key challenge that all economies face and will only increase in importance; and that the Scottish economy is well placed to benefit from the development of the low carbon economy.

4.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Climate change is incorporated into the priorities in the Single Midlothian Plan 2016/17 and related Council 2016/17 Service Plans.

4.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The Scottish Parliament Finance Committee has identified climate change as a major area of policy where preventative spending could have impact. The impacts of a changing climate are likely to fall hardest on the disadvantaged, for example in terms of higher energy bills and greater vulnerability to flooding.

4.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Communities and stakeholders have not needed to be involved in the preparation of the proposed report.

4.8 Ensuring Equalities

No actions with 'people implications' are proposed that would necessitate an Equalities Impact Assessment.

4.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The Council's Sustainable Development Framework lists reporting climate change activity amongst its arrangements for contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. The proposed report is not a strategic action in terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, therefore it is not subject to any strategic environmental assessment related requirements.

4.10 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising directly from this report.

5 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee notes the points of clarification outlined in the report.

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Background Papers:

1. The Council's statement of Compliance with Climate Change Duties for 2015/16 reported to Cabinet at its meeting of 22 November 2016 and Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee 29 November 2016.
2. Corporate Climate Change & Sustainable Development Action Plan.
3. Carbon Management Plan 2013 – 2016 and associated Cabinet paper dated 11 October 2016.
4. Climate Ready Scotland: Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme (Scottish Government, May 2014)