

# SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held remotely by Microsoft Teams on Friday, 17 September 2021 at 10.00 am

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Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), H. Anderson, J. Greenwell, H. Laing, J. Linehan, and D. Paterson.  
Apologies:- Councillors, K. Chapman, G. Edgar and S.Scott  
In Attendance:- Chief Planning & Housing Officer (I. Aikman), Corporate Policy Advisor (M. Cook), Environmental Strategy Officer (L. Cox), Cleaning & Facilities Manager (J. Gray), Education rep (D. Matthewson), Waste Manager (R. Sharp-Dent), Project Management Team Leader (E. Doyle), Youth Engagement Officer (P. Rigby), Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall)

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## 1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting of 4 June 2021. With reference to paragraph 6.2 of the Minute and the sentence "Councillor Anderson asked if Community Council representatives could be invited to make a presentation..", this should have read "Councillor Anderson asked if representatives of Pesticide Action Network could be invited to make a presentation...".

## **DECISION**

**APPROVED for signature by the Chairman, subject to the above amendment.**

## 2. **SUSTAINABILITY IN COUNCIL CATERING AND CLEANING**

2.1 With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 5 March 2021, there had been circulated copies of a joint report by the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure and the Service Director Young People, Engagement and Inclusion which set out progress following a presentation by the Youth Ambassadors for Sustainability to the Sustainable Development Committee on 5 March 2021 on the subject of 'Stopping the Use of Plastic Bottles in Schools'. The report noted that, while progress in decommissioning plastic bottles, particularly single use bottles, in schools was objectively and symbolically important, it remained an individual step in a broader suite of actions aimed at delivering a sustainable Catering and Cleaning Service. The report placed action in the context of the global climate and nature emergencies, the legal and regulatory obligations upon public bodies to prioritise and take account of climate and the circular economy in their procurement activity and the Council's own commitments pursuant to the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map, including the commitment to embed Net Zero practices in SBC's own operations, capital programmes and value chains. Progress had been made through more sustainable product packaging choices in the region's primary and high schools, catering generally and cleaning. Some of the practical challenges in balancing occasionally conflicting priorities to maintain nutritional standards, whilst also removing unsustainable packaging, were also identified. Waste and our collective responsibility to reduce, reuse and recycle was highlighted, together with the vital importance of education, cultural and behavioural change, with schools playing a central role. Current progress on both of those work streams was set out.

It was acknowledged that a holistic approach was essential to making further progress in ensuring that products and processes were as fully sustainable as possible, supported by a strategic approach which built in qualitative and quantitative performance metrics. Lastly, it was proposed a follow up report on Sustainable Procurement in Catering and Cleaning would be brought to the Sustainable Development Committee on 3 December 2021. John Gray, Cleaning & Facilities Manager, provided some context to the report and explained that guest speakers from the food and drinks industry would make presentations to explain what was happening in the sector with regard to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

2.2 Andrew Gibbons of AG Barr joined the meeting. Mr Gibbons gave an outline of the work that was undertaken by his company to improve the carbon footprint of their soft drinks business, this included measures such as using a higher percentage of recycled plastics in their bottles and packaging. The presentation gave an insight into the work that the soft drink industry was doing to reduce the impact of their business upon the environment, including:

- Doing the Right Thing and No Time to Waste Programme
- Contribution to the UN Sustainable Goals and Environmental Standard ISO14001
- Carbon net zero to be achieved by 2040 or sooner if possible
- Packaging to be recycled, not discarded as litter
- 100% of soft drinks packaging currently recyclable
- 100% recycled films in multipacks and paper straws in cartons

2.3 In response to questions from Members, Mr Gibbons advised that information was still awaited on the bottle return scheme which was being set up by Circularity Scotland and would hopefully be in place by summer 2022. Mr Aikman, Chief Planning & Housing Officer, added that previously the Committee had considered the removal of plastic bottles from schools, but this was a much wider issue concerning packaging, products and recycling, which involved not just other Services within the Council, but suppliers as well. Mr Gibbons confirmed that this was a partnership between governments, suppliers and end users, and added that the presentation could be used within schools if desired. Members asked that only scientific details from the presentation were used in schools and not inadvertently the promotion of soft drinks. It was not about the contents but the packaging itself that was the focus.

2.4 Colin Dyer and Amy Marshall of Campbell Brothers joined the meeting. Ms Marshall gave a presentation that outlined the work that had gone on within their business to alleviate some of the environmental impact of their meat and fish business, including:

- Overview of Campbell Bros butchers and fishmongers only working with sustainable suppliers
- Market trends and developments
- Sourcing meat locally where possible and fish from Scotland when in season
- Accreditations for meat and fish
- Reduction of single use plastic
- Carbon footprint reduction, currently zero waste to landfill and reductions in fleet emissions
- Meat in a net zero world and alternative products

2.5 In response to questions from Members, Mr Dyer explained that due to food safety reasons, when packaging and selling fresh meat products there would always be an element of single use plastic; however work was ongoing to create a biodegradable solution. Regarding short supply chains, Mr Dyer advised the committee that an experiment had taken place with SBC to use locally reared lamb in school meals, however ongoing logistical and economic challenges remained. While the company would like to use Borders lamb and beef, a consistent supply was needed, so while 10kgs of lamb could be needed in a week, this would only be part of the carcass so options on what to do with the remainder remained

unresolved. With regard to the impact of Brexit, Mr Dyer advised that the company had confidence in the products they were bringing in to the country and no product was purchased that did not meet their current standards, which was the same as previously. The company had responsibility and accountability to meet BRC accreditation (certification against food, packaging, storage and distribution standards) so any of their suppliers had to be able to provide the required information. Members thanked the presenters for their attendance and their insightful presentations.

- 2.6 Noting that the focus of the present report and activity it outlined was product packaging, Mr Gray explained to the committee that the two presentations reflected the holistic approach that was required across all of society to make systemic changes to waste and consumer habits. As reflected in the report, extensive decommissioning of single use plastics in both primary and secondary schools. Particular progress had been made in Primary Schools with large scale removal of plastic bottles and the replacement of plastic containers through the use of crockery. The catering offering within High Schools presented more of a challenge as pupils could choose to go elsewhere. The key point was the need to work with suppliers. Mr Sharp-Dent outlined the situation with regards to waste management in schools, explaining that the aim was not to get packaging into the market place in the first place and what there would be as recyclable as possible, with the use of the least amount of raw materials. There would always be packaging of some sort, so more insight was needed in what was happening within our school buildings. A pilot scheme was proposed for one school which would seek to acquire data and build a case for rolling out further waste management techniques across all schools. The challenge for Waste Services was in identifying resources for this as Covid still provided a challenge. Debbie Matthewson, from the Education Service, commented on a couple of projects within schools on reducing waste. There was a local authority network with Education Scotland and SBC services could also work together to address issues. Members paid tribute to all those involved in the production of the report.

## **DECISION**

### **(a) NOTED:-**

**(i) the progress made in decommissioning the use of single-use plastic bottles for sale as part of the Council's catering offer within Scottish Borders Primary Schools;**

**(ii) the progress made in substituting products for sale as part of the Council's catering offer within Scottish Borders schools which were assessed as more consistent with the Council's sustainable procurement duties;**

**(iii) that progress on Sustainable Procurement sat within the Resilience Theme of the Climate Change Route Map and that Officers were progressing a holistic approach to embedding further sustainable practice, bringing together Education, Catering and Cleaning, Procurement and Waste Services to support further action; and**

**(iv) that it was proposed to scope and seek approval for a pilot waste management exercise in a high school which would involve the provision of comprehensive recycling facilities to assess the behaviour patterns of users of the buildings and the quantities of materials deposited. Subject to approval, progress of the pilot would be reported to the Sustainable Development Committee.**

### **(b) ENDORSED the broader approach to prioritising and taking account of climate and circular economy in the Council's procurement activity.**

**(c) AGREED that:-**

**(i) the Council would provide dedicated support to develop the Learning for Sustainability agenda within all Scottish Borders Council schools. This officer resource would link strategic management decisions to curriculum opportunities supporting positive behaviour changes both within schools and in wider domestic and community life; and**

**(ii) a follow up report on Sustainable Procurement in Catering and Cleaning, setting out further progress, would be brought to the Sustainable Development Committee on 3 December 2021.**

**MEMBER**

Councillor Patterson left the meeting during discussion of the above item.

**3 REGIONAL LAND USE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

3.1 Senior Policy Advisor, Douglas Scott, gave a presentation on the Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP). He explained that Regional Land Use Partnerships were a key element of the National Land Use policy. They aimed to identify opportunities for land use change to deliver environmental, socio-economic and climate change through the production of a regional Land Use Framework. This would be achieved through collaborative working with all stakeholders to optimise land use in a fair and inclusive way. A joint bid from Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC), Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and South of Scotland Enterprise Agency (SOSE) was submitted in January 2021. The South of Scotland (SoS) was chosen as one of five pilot Regional Land Use Partnerships in Scotland in April 2021. The first phase of the project up to March 2022 was for the pilot regions to undertake the development of the required governance and to build to the appropriate relationships to enable the RLUPs to function. The second phase from April 2022 to March 2023 was for the RLUP to develop its Regional Land Use Framework. The final stage from March 2023 onwards would focus on delivering the objectives in the framework by making collaborative land use change decisions in the SoS. The project would be managed through a steering group comprising senior officers from SBC, DGC, SOSE and chaired by the two Councils. Scottish Borders Council would administer the award, SOSE would carry out the appointment process with the two Councils, and SOSE would employ the project manager. The application process to appoint the Project Manager was ongoing, with interviews scheduled to take place on 23 September 2021.

3.2 Members expressed their gratitude for the update. In response to a question regarding Members' representation on the steering group, Mr Scott explained that they would set up the governance of the group and make recommendations. The group would be guided by consensus. Mr Scott confirmed that a report would be presented to Council with further details in due course.

**DECISION**

**NOTED the presentation attached as an Appendix to this Minute.**

**MEMBER**

Councillor Paterson re-joined the meeting during discussion of the above item.

**4. CLIMATE CHANGE ROUTE MAP PROGRESS UPDATE**

With reference to Paragraph 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of Scottish Borders Council on 17 June 2021, the Chief Housing and Planning Officer, Ian Aikman, provided an update on the Climate Change Route Map. Transport, Energy and Waste were identified as the first themes of the key priority actions. Potentially significant funding opportunities associated

with the UK Government Levelling Up Fund had been identified to support projects across the Transport theme and town centre regeneration which would also support access to local services - thus offering emissions reductions in both domestic energy and local travel. Candidates had been interviewed for the post of Climate Change Officer, however the preferred candidate had chosen not to accept the position. Officers were considering how to proceed, including the modification of the role description and the terms and conditions. This was an area where quite a number of other local authorities and organisations were currently trying to recruit. In terms of carbon literacy training, it was confirmed that 19 people had now received certification. Mr Aikman further explained that part of the Officer Group was to share best practice and encourage partners to do likewise, so there was mutual support in driving the agenda forward. The current focus was on key things that the Council could do but as we moved forward in the medium/longer term, that focus could shift to a Borders-wide perspective. On the topic of corporate Governance changes, it was noted that John Curry, Director of Infrastructure & Environment was now providing oversight and had helped link key elements together, which had moved the work agenda forward.

#### **DECISION**

**NOTED the presentation attached as an Appendix to this Minute.**

5. **URGENT BUSINESS**

**Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the items dealt with in the following paragraphs should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to keep Members informed.**

6. **COP 26 UPDATE**

The Corporate Policy Advisor, Michael Cook, gave an update on matters relating to COP26. He outlined the different zones that would be present at the event: the UN managed blue zone; the UK Government managed green zone and fringe events managed by the Scottish Government. Regarding participation in the event, it was explained that the first application made was for the green zone for the South of Scotland natural capital proposition. COSLA was responsible for co-ordinating a Local Authority application, and that application had been lodged. Unfortunately, the South of Scotland application had been unsuccessful. Mr Cook noted that the application process was opaque and that no feedback had been provided on why applications had not been successful. Given the timeframe, Mr Cook went on to explain that any official participation by SBC was now extremely unlikely. The Chairman thanked the officers involved for their excellent work in preparing the applications on behalf of the Council, expressed his disappointment at the outcome and resolved to participate in any way that technology would allow.

#### **DECISION**

**NOTED.**

7. **PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK**

With reference to paragraph 6.2 of the Minute of 4 June 2021, the Chairman advised that the possibility of a pilot to go pesticide-free in Peebles was still being investigated. Officers in Neighbourhood teams were so involved in their day to day work it had not been possible to arrange a meeting yet, but it would hopefully happen over the next few weeks. Covid was still impacting heavily on Council front line services, the provision of which needed to be maintained.

#### **DECISION**

**NOTED.**

***The meeting concluded at 12.24pm.***