

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting of the SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE held Via
Microsoft Teams on Friday, 17 June 2022 at
10.00 am

Present:- Councillors J. Linehan (Chairman), D. Begg (from para 2.), J. Greenwell, J. PatonDay, and R. Tatler.

Apologies:- Councillors L. Douglas, N. Mackinnon, E. Small, A. Smart, E. Thornton-Nicol and T. Weatherston.

In Attendance:- Chief Planning & Housing Officer (I. Aikman), Corporate Policy Advisor (M. Cook), Climate Change Officer (J. Fausset), Environmental Strategy Officer (L. Cox), Greenspace Manager (C. Cooke), Project Management Team Leader (E. Doyle), Youth Engagement Officer (P. Rigby), Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall)

1. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the Meeting held on 11 March 2022.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

2. ROLE OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

There had been circulated copies of an extract from the Interim Scheme of Administration approved, as amended on 26 May 2022 which concerned the Sustainable Development Committee. The Chief Planning and Housing Officer, Mr Ian Aikman explained that the extract from the scheme of administration that had been circulated with the agenda reflected the basis of the Committee, and in particular its functions. The main focus of the Committee had been to recommend how Scottish Borders Council tackled climate change. The Committee had deviated from that narrowly defined function, and it was clear that there was a role for the Committee to consider, provide oversight, and scrutiny of recommendations for Council, linked to the Priority Action Plan. In order to reflect the work of the Committee and the landscape that it operated in, Mr Aikman proposed to amend the Scheme of Administration to widen the role of the Committee to reflect the remit of the Committee as focused not solely on Climate Change. This was unanimously agreed. In response to a question regarding whether the amendments would allow the Committee to scrutinise in a more effective manner, Mr Aikman explained that the amendments would give a more accurate reflection of the work that the Committee had undertaken. In response to a question regarding the annual reports to Council, Mr Aikman outlined that the annual report was a key document, and that scrutiny would happen at the Committee meetings on a quarterly basis.

DECISION

AGREED to delegate authority to Officers to seek amendments to the Scheme of Administration, particularly with regards to the "Functions Referred" section and the name of the Committee.

MEMBER

Councillor Begg joined the meeting during the discussion of the above item.

3. SCOTTISH BORDERS CLIMATE CHANGE ROUTE MAP

There had been circulated copies of Our Climate Change Route Map for the Scottish Borders (CCRM) with the agenda. Corporate Policy Advisor, Mr Michael Cook gave a presentation and explained that the document should be viewed in light of three key steps. The Council had committed to the UN Sustainable development goals in August 2019, agreed to the Climate Emergency Declaration in 2020, which recognised the threat posed by climate change, followed by the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map publicised in June 2021. The CCRM was a Council created document, but was focused on a just transition to net zero for the region by 2045. Mr Cook explained that a key principle of the Route Map was that the transition to net zero should not weigh unduly on the most vulnerable, and that changes needed to be shared out equitably. The CCRM was focused on trying to find best practise and recognised that the route to net zero would be a generational challenge. Mr Cook outlined the emissions baseline for the region and explained that net zero by 2045 was a legally binding target, with an interim target of 90% by 2040 also present. All public bodies were required to set targets based on the 2011 baseline, with discussions ongoing with regional partners on how to achieve those targets. A key part of achieving the goals was partnership collaboration on a local, regional and national level. Mr Cook highlighted behavioural change as an area that would make up a significant percentage of carbon reduction, and that effective engagement was essential to deliver that required change. Members welcomed the briefing.

DECISION

NOTED the briefing.

4. PLAN OF PRIORITY ACTIONS

- 4.1 There had been circulated copies of the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map - Draft Priority Actions 2022-2024. Mr Cook explained that the Plan had been agreed in March 2021 by Scottish Borders Council, and that a number of Officers were involved with work across 5 key themes. There were 5 milestones per theme, and the Plan provided a framework for detailed action. It was envisaged that the Plan was the beginning of a continual cycle of action, with further actions developed from completed ones. Mr Cook stressed that Scottish Borders Council's work on climate action had commenced prior to the Plan. However, the urgent need to tackle climate change had been of paramount concern when the plan was devised.
- 4.2 Mr Cook introduced Ms Louise Cox, Environmental Strategy Officer, who discussed theme one: Building Resilience. Ms Cox explained that building resilience was outcome focused, and that discussions were held with the Director – Infrastructure and Environment to assess the service area and its connections. Regarding the goal to get 50% of staff accredited on Carbon literacy training via online training modules, the training would sit alongside other mandatory training modules for staff with the Council. The goal with regards to Learning for Sustainability involved embedding the Learning for Sustainability teaching into all primary and secondary schools across the region by training staff and delivering the universal entitlement to all SBC pupils. Work was ongoing to develop the business case for the South East Scotland Regional Climate Risk Assessment, with resources required to develop, and the scope of the shared prosperity fund needed to be assessed. In the context of coastal sea defences, consultancy work was ongoing and an update was expected with the next action Plan. With regards to bridges and other structures, properly detailed risk assessments and inspections were planned following the appropriate tender process. Mr Cook highlighted that Item Number 6 on the agenda concerned Carbon Literacy training for Members, and that a slide presentation would be circulated on the theme of Decarbonising our Waste Management following the meeting.
- 4.3 The Project Management Team Leader, Mr Ewan Doyle, gave a presentation on the theme of Decarbonising our Transport Use from the Action Plan. Mr Doyle explained that there were 10 initial actions in the first two years of the plan. The new National Transport Strategy 2 had been introduced several years ago, which focused on reducing inequalities, health and wellbeing, promoting active travel and increasing inclusive growth.

With regard to the 10 initial actions, the first – local access and transport strategy, had not progressed but considerable background action was ongoing. With regard to Active Travel, feasibility studies had been carried out with a view to delivering key infrastructure across the region to allow people to make the choice on how to travel. The community engagement element of the plan had been positive, with 1300 responses. Mr Doyle explained that there was considerable overlap between plans for the active travel network, and that partnership working would ultimately be key to develop a coordinated strategic network. With regard to behavioural change, Mr Doyle highlighted that a key part of the behavioural changes needed to reach net zero would derive from providing more mass transit and the way people used private cars. The 20 mph speed limit in settlements across the Scottish Borders was highlighted as providing a safe environment for active travel. Emerging technology, such as photovoltaic street lighting, had the potential to deliver benefits in the pursuit of net zero. A series of reviews and studies related to rural electric car usage, the bus network and the road network had the potential to significantly alter how people travel in the region and provide considerable benefits in carbon reduction. A demand responsive travel pilot was underway in Berwickshire, and had the potential to integrate areas with no public transport connections into the network. The scheme involved providing flexible rather than fixed services based on passenger demand and need. The usage had been positive in the initial stages, with good usage amongst the under 22s. Regarding plans to decarbonise the fleet, Mr Doyle explained that work had been undertaken regarding installing chargers, purchasing new fleet vehicles and that a new strategy for managing the mixture of electric and hydrogen powered vehicles was planned.

- 4.4 The Greenspace Manager, Ms Carol Cooke provided an overview on the theme of Nature Based Solutions to Climate Change. Ms Cooke provided a definition of nature based solutions as actions that protect, manage and restore ecosystems that address societal challenges and provide human well-being and biodiversity benefits. The proposed actions under the Plan for nature based solutions included a review of greenspace management, with a goal to increase biodiversity and reduced greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle and machinery use. An urban tree policy was being developed which used funding from the Scottish Government, it was expected that the policy would be brought to Committee in September. Woodland Creation was planned, with appropriate planning guidance expected. With regards to the Pollinators along the Tweed project, which aimed to increase biodiversity along the Tweed corridor, progress was ongoing, with community engagement a key element of that project. Ms Cooke outlined the further elements of the theme, and highlighted that the Greener Gateway Community awards, a relaunch of the floral gateway completion, looked to promote a climate first approach, with more sustainable planting a focus.
- 4.5 Mr Neil Robertson, Energy Efficiency and Strategy Officer, gave a presentation of work ongoing under the theme of Lowering Our Energy Consumption. Mr Robertson explained that particular focus had been on the Local Heating and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES), which was a national measure. The strategy and delivery plan would be in place by the end of 2023 as there was a legal requirement for all Local Authorities to have one developed. The core strategy team delivering the Strategy was in place, with a goal to align the core deliverable goals across the region. Mr Robertson stressed that data analysis was a key part of delivering the LHEES, and that work was ongoing to understand the challenges that would arise in delivery.
- 4.6 Ms Debbie Matthewson, Principal Teacher of Stow Primary School and Learning for Sustainability Officer, provided an insight into activity that had occurred across the region. Working in partnership with Mr Ross Sharp-Dent, Waste and Passenger Transport Manager, a pilot had been carried out across 5 schools in the area, with each school asked to weigh their waste and recycling bin over a 2 week period and record the results. A presentation had been given to pupils outlining what could and could not be recycled, and the results were currently being assessed. Ms Matthewson highlighted the pilot as a good example of cross service work on the climate change route map. Ms Matthewson

added that she hoped that all teachers would be trained on global citizenship for the next academic year.

- 4.7 Members in attendance thanked the Officers for their presentation and highlighted that communications to the public needed to be more focused and user friendly, to enable the public to see what excellent work was being undertaken. Councillor Tatler highlighted the need for a just and fair transition to be of paramount importance, with communications to the public which reflected that. In response to an issue regarding ways in which the Council could be more climate friendly, Mr Cook thanked Members for their input and highlighted that in the journey to net zero, 60% of changes would have to be behavioural in nature. Mr Cook acknowledged the need for a just transition and stressed unless the route to net zero was just, it would not succeed. Regarding Electric Vehicle charging points, Mr Cook explained that a feasibility study was ongoing to access how to create the most effective and fit for purpose network of charging points. In response to the issues raised by Members Mr Aikman stressed that the Council had to ensure that effective partnership working was in place across the region. Regarding Planning, Mr Aikman stressed that a National Planning Framework 4 was expected to be put before Parliament in Autumn, and that it was expected that climate change and a just transition would be at the heart of policy in that area. Mr Doyle stressed that the EV charging study would be completed in the autumn of 2022, and that the key focus of the study was to ensure that there was suitable provision across the region.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

5. **FORWARD PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**
Mr Aikman explained that work was ongoing to develop the forward programme for the next period, and that a standing item would be put on the Agenda for future meetings which provided an update on progress. Future meetings of the Committee were expected to be themed, with the next meeting in September expected to focus on Education, training skills, with a wider scope than solely SBC officers. Mr Aikman welcomed feedback from the Elected Members and welcomed guidance on what topics to address and discuss. Mr Aikman agreed to circulate the forward planner to Members and undertook to seek more Member input.

DECISION

NOTED

6. **CARBON LITERACY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**
Ms Cox explained that Carbon Literacy Training for elected Members was offered by Keep Scotland Beautiful. The training was based on existing bespoke accredited materials. The training was delivered in four modules, with a certificate provided on completion. The content covered included an introduction to climate change, the impact of climate change, mitigation and a focus on how individuals could impact upon climate change in a positive manner. It was hoped that as many Elected Members as possible would undergo the training.

DECISION

NOTED

The meeting concluded at 11.55 am