CLIMATE CHANGE: COUNCIL EMISSIONS AND PUBLIC REPORTING

Report by Director Infrastructure & Environment

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

23 November 2023

1   PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

1.1. This report requests that Council approves the draft Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Compliance Report 2022/23 (Appendix 1) prior to submission to the Scottish Government in advance of the deadline of 30 November 2023.

1.2. By the end of November each year, the Council, in common with other public bodies, is required to report to Scottish Government on its progress in delivering climate action organisationally and within the Local Authority area for the preceding financial year.

1.3. The Council has been working with the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (ECCI) to develop an approach to meeting these requirements. This approach proposes increasing the sources of emissions which the Council reports against. This is consistent with the approach of other similar organisations, and it increases the Council's understanding of its emissions impact, while enhancing its ability to manage that impact on a trajectory consistent with national targets and the Council's own targets.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that Council:

a. Approves the draft Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report 2022/23 (Appendix 1) for submission, with authority for final sign off being delegated to the Director of Infrastructure and Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Transport;

b. Notes progress with respect to current targets set;

c. Notes the ongoing corporate activity to embed climate change/net zero and sustainability into the organisation; and

d. Notes that a further report will be submitted to Council outlining a strategic estates plan for the operational estate which will include a target for emissions reduction.

3   BACKGROUND

3.1. Having declared a Climate Emergency on 29 September 2020, the Council approved the 'Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map' (CCRM) on 17 June 2021 and a Plan of Priority Actions to animate and expedite progress on climate action in March 2022.

3.2. Scottish Borders Council has worked with the Edinburgh Climate Change Institute (ECCI) to support next steps in delivering the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map (CCRM). Delivery of the CCRM requires the Council continually to strengthen its baseline of emissions data, to help the Council plan, manage and monitor progress against key emissions sources at an organisational level.

3.3. Additionally, in designing and delivering its own programme for emissions reduction, we must establish the foundation to lead an area-wide strategy, which delivers a net zero region by 2045, in line with Scotland's national targets.

3.4. Two workshops with Council Managers and Directors took place in Autumn 2022 to support these objectives, while a third workshop with Community Planning Partners in Spring 2023 focused on the approach needed for area-wide emissions reduction.

3.5. Workshops with Council Managers and Directors facilitated by ECCI assisted the Council to:

- Assess the climate impact of council operations and decisions
- Target key areas for emissions reduction
- Develop targeted actions across both service delivery and support functions
- Understand where the Council has control or influence over emissions in the Scottish Borders area; and
- Understand how the Council can support emissions reduction across the region.

3.6. ECCI recommended that the two key areas that the Council should focus emission reduction action on over the next 4 years are energy in buildings (particularly heat) and on transport related emissions i.e. fleet and business mileage. These 2 areas account for approximately 79% of the Council's carbon emissions (54% associated with heat and 25% with fleet) within the Council's current carbon boundary.

3.7. Council agreed (24 November 2022) to set a high-level organisational target of net zero by 2045 (or earlier if achievable) reflecting the national target for emissions, and to develop sectoral targets within the Council's operations, set within 5-year timescales to focus and drive forward meaningful action against the targets. The following was approved:

- 20% reduction in fleet fossil fuel consumption (petrol, diesel) and a 20% reduction in business mileage, where employees use their own car (grey fleet), over the period 2019/20 to 2024/25.

- Five percent waste to landfill by 2025 and zero biodegradable municipal waste to landfill by 2025. (For practical purposes, these targets associated with waste have been achieved).

- It was also agreed that a target for direct emissions associated with the Council's estate would be proposed for agreement as part of this Public Bodies Climate Change Duties report in November 2023.

3.8. Progress against these targets is discussed in section 4.

4 CLIMATE CHANGE REPORTING (DUTIES OF PUBLIC BODIES: REPORTING REQUIREMENTS)

4.1. Since 2015, all public bodies in Scotland have been required to complete annual climate change reports by the end of November each year through the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report (PBCCDR).

4.2. The Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015 requires listed public bodies (including the Council) to report on their compliance, including:

- Climate change governance, management and strategy
- Corporate emissions, projects and targets
- Adaptation – including risk assessments and management
- Procurement – how goods and services are managed to help meet targets and minimise impacts from climate risks.

4.3. Council is asked to approve the draft Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report 2022/23 (Appendix 1). In so doing, Elected Members should note the following points:

Overview of emissions trajectory

4.4. Overall carbon emissions have decreased slightly (by 1.2%) compared to those reported in the previous reporting year (2021-22). This is positive. However, it should be noted that the Council's total emissions are likely to increase in some years as we develop our approach. This is not an unanticipated nor necessarily a negative outcome. It is consistent with increasing our understanding and control of our emissions. The aim is to reduce emissions within each source reported, and, ultimately, to reduce overall emissions in aggregate across the organisation's total emissions.

4.5. Direct emissions (Scope 1 i.e those emissions that are owned or controlled by the Council) have decreased. This is due to a small decrease (0.5%) in fleet fuel consumption. There has also been a decrease in consumption of natural gas (3.5%) and gas oil (18%) in Council buildings during the reporting year.

4.6. Scope 2 emissions (i.e. indirect emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating generated by a third party) have increased slightly. This is due to a small increase (1.6%) in electricity consumption in buildings. However, it should be noted that the electricity (kWh) consumed by street lighting fell by 8.9%. This is primarily due to

replacing lamps with newer more energy efficient lamps as and when the originals are gone beyond repair.

4.7.   Scope 3 emissions (i.e. other indirect emissions that are a consequence of the Council's actions, but are different in that they do not arise from assets owned and controlled by the Council) are complex. The Council will continue to add emission sources to this scope as referred to in paragraph 4.4, as guidance and methodologies are developed and refined. Data for 'grey' mileage (i.e. mileage when staff use their own vehicle), a Scope 3 emission source was not reported last year but is included in this current report. This will be an ongoing reported emission source as the Council agreed (24 Nov 2022) to a 20% reduction target in business mileage where staff use their own car (See paragraph 4.10).

4.8.   The methodology for calculating the emissions associated with staff working from home (Scope 3) has changed compared to that used in the previous reporting year (updated SSN guidance). With this change in methodology an increase in working from home emissions would be expected, however a more accurate % for the number of staff working from home has been used for this reporting year, which has meant an overall reduction in emissions for this source.

Progress with targets

4.9.   The Council agreed (24 Nov 2022) a 20% reduction in fleet fossil fuel consumption (petrol, diesel) based on a 2019/20 baseline (i.e. pre Covid 19) with a target year of 2024/25. There has been a steady reduction in litres consumed by fleet over the past 2 reporting years. Should this trajectory continue, the Council will be on course to meet its target reduction by 2024/25. The reduction in fossil fuel consumption is primarily due to the increased number of fleet electric vehicles purchased. As noted in paragraph 4.6 there was a slight increase (1.6%) in total electricity (kWh) consumed. This may be due to the fact that not all electric vehicle charging points associated with buildings are sub metered to accurately distinguish the electricity consumption by electric vehicles.

4.10.   The Council also agreed a 20% reduction in business mileage, where employees use their own car, over the period 2019/20 to 2024/25. There was a significant reduction in miles travelled on business by employees using their own car in the financial year 2021/22 compared to the baseline year of 2019/20. This is most likely due to Covid 19 and lockdown. However, the number of miles travelled has increased considerably in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. It should be noted that this figure is still a reduction on the baseline year figure but if the target is to be achieved in 2024/25 a reduction in miles travelled needs to be delivered year on year.

4.11.   Council also agreed that a target for a reduction in carbon emissions from the Council's operational estate be established. This has not been achieved for a number of important reasons:

    (i)   The council has a large operational estate that requires a strategic approach to its management, maintenance and investment. Work is ongoing to look holistically at the estate in terms of future

requirements so that the estate is fit for purpose e.g. meets current and future service provision, is efficient to operate, explores collaboration opportunities with key partners and communities (co-location), is digitally capable etc., while also delivering against organisational net zero objectives.

(ii) Addressing the issues outlined in (i) above is integral to developing an effective decarbonisation strategy for the estate and formulating a credible emissions reduction target.

(iii) Development of a holistic strategic plan for the Council's estate which will also inform investment and focus on project delivery is a key requirement for the public bodies duties report.

(iv) The strategic plan for the Council's estate is not sufficiently advanced to enable a credible emissions reduction target to be set for the Council's estate at this juncture. A strategic plan prepared by Estates will be reported separately to Council setting out the approach as detailed in (i) above including establishing a carbon reduction target for the operational estate.

Current areas of activity

4.12. A number of strategic approaches are currently being pursued as set out below. These are essential steps in the Council (like other public bodies) being able to demonstrate how our organisation is aligning spend with net zero, pursuant to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 amendment in 2022.

a. Work is ongoing to embed key reporting elements of the public bodies climate change duty report into regular corporate performance reporting. This will make the reporting process more beneficial to the Council i.e. data will be relevant to the reporting quarter, providing a stronger and more timely picture of progress. This will allow key issues highlighted by data patterns to be addressed timeously.

b. The Council is strengthening its business planning approach. This is manifested in development of a new style of Council Plan over the last 3 years, supported by improved departmental and service planning, and the evolution of a Scottish Borders Council Operating Model set out in the report to Council of 31 August 2023. The underpinning objective of these efforts is to deliver outcomes based upon the Council's strategic priorities. Delivering on Net Zero is a clear priority, reflected in the Clean Green Future theme of the Council Plan, and in the Sustainable Development and Environmental Responsibility principle of the Operating Model. While elements of the overall approach to business planning are still at an early stage (e.g. the SBC Operating Model), entrenching Net Zero and sustainability objectives within strategic plans is essential to embedding them also within operational delivery. Clearly, this is an iterative process and the aim is to continue to build on this approach year on year.

Area Wide Emissions

4.13 During FY 2022/23 SoSE led (in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council) a project to establish a South of Scotland Emissions Baseline as a key phase in the development of a South

of Scotland route map to net zero. SoSE commissioned Ricardo Consulting to collate the carbon and net zero related data across the South of Scotland region The following sectors were included: industry, commercial, public sector, domestic, transport, land use, land use change and forestry, agriculture and waste management. The total emissions for the Scottish Borders area is 1,396 Kt CO_2e.

4.14 Given that the transition to net zero will transform all parts of our society and economy, a co-ordinated partnership approach is fundamental to delivery.   The Community Planning Partnership sits at the heart of this regional effort. Plotting the pathway to delivery is a practical issue. A Practitioners' group has been established to bring key partners together to support the Community Planning Partnership in developing co-ordinated and impactful action, which responds to the key messages of the South of Scotland Emissions Baseline exercise. Another step in our development process, namely, a workshop to explore how governance supports delivery, is scheduled for 6 December 2023.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Financial
5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

5.1.2 As a result of budget limitations, some actions described in the Plan of Priority Actions may mean that the way the Council delivers some services in future is likely to change to help meet emissions targets. It should be recognised, however, that changes to service delivery will often be appropriate to drive carbon emissions reductions irrespective of budget pressures.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations
5.2.1 Climate Change is identified as a corporate risk as part of SBC's corporate risk management process. This is reviewed quarterly by relevant senior officers and the appropriate Director. The Strategic Leadership Team of Chief Executive and Directors have oversight of the Corporate Risk Register, which includes this Climate Change risk, on a quarterly basis in line with SBC Risk Management Policy and Strategy. This risk underpins the refreshed Council Plan 2022/23 and the specific 'Clean, Green Future' outcome.

5.2.2 Risk to the Council is defined under 4 key aspects:

- Failure of the Council to deliver against its legal duties under current and developing climate legislation and policy commitments, including Public Bodies Climate Change Duties reporting. It is essential that appropriate skills development takes place and that adequate resource and capacity is available to deliver against these requirements. Regular monitoring and review processes will be required to ensure compliance and delivery. Training and awareness are key to the strategic thinking and delivery of actions needed to transition to net zero. This is being progressed e.g. the Royal Scottish Geographical Society

(RSGS) met with Council Management Team on 13 Nov 2023 to discuss climate change solutions for the Scottish Borders.

- The Council's continued commitment to 'tackling climate change' is in its Council Plan, and related commitments and actions within the CCRM and the Plan of Priority Actions. The Council will face significant reputational risk if it fails to support delivery of the actions required to make good on this commitment.

- There are also potential financial and service delivery risks associated with not addressing the need to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate. These impacts will include increased likelihood of extreme weather events, effects on transport and access to services and service delivery, security of supply of energy, food and other goods. By taking action on the basis of the CCRM and Plan of Priority Actions, the Council will mitigate these risks.

- The changes required to place and maintain the Council and the wider Scottish Borders on a Just Transition to Net Zero are without precedent. Quite apart from the changes required in our processes, the extent of behaviour change required presents significant public expectation management risks.

5.2.3 The development of SBC's Internal Audit Strategy for 2023/24 includes 'integrating climate change into all assurance audits as a cross-cutting risk to provide assurance that the underlying controls and processes in all Services that support climate change commitments, plans and programmes are operating as intended'. This is a clear example of a proactive Council service embedding climate change and sustainability within its service function and in doing so assisting other Council services to do likewise.

5.3   Integrated Impact Assessment

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and published on the Council's website.

5.4   United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Work detailed in this report supports a number of UN Sustainable Development Goals as follows:

i. UN SDG 13: 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts'.
ii. UN SDG 1 – to end poverty,
iii. UN SDG 2 – promote sustainable agriculture,
iv. UN SDG 7- Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

5.5   Climate Change
The purpose of this report is to seek approval to submit the Council's mandatory annual climate change report to Scottish Government (Appendix 1). It also outlines current corporate activity being carried out

to embed climate change/net zero/sustainability activity into corporate Council processes.

5.6 Rural Proofing
The work outlined in this report underpins the Council's commitment to deliver on the UN SDGs, and its duties under Equalities legislation. Thus, an equalities based approach, including in rural settings, is built into the recommendations of this report which are complementary and conducive to the objective of Rural Proofing.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation
No changes are required to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Name	**Title**
John Curry	**Director Infrastructure and Environment**

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jenny Fausset	Climate Change Officer

Background Papers:
Scottish Borders Council, 31 August 2023, SBC Operating Model

Previous Minute Reference:
Scottish Borders Council, 24 November 2022

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Fausset can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jenny.Fausset@scotborders.gov.uk