

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING AND PLACE

ABSTRACT

This report gives an overview of Angus Council's compliance with its climate change duties and proposes measures to improve governance relating to sustainability and climate change.

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) approves the contents of this report in accordance with the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
- (ii) agrees to modifying governance arrangements in relation to climate change by: expanding the remit and membership of the carbon Member Officer Group to lead climate change and nominating an additional Member from the administration group and two Members from the non-administration to progress work alongside officers.
- (iii) agrees to support continuing discussions with neighbouring local authorities, investigating potential benefits of a regional approach to climate change

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- Our carbon footprint is reduced
- Our communities are developed in a sustainable manner
- Our nature and built environment is protected and enjoyed

3. BACKGROUND

As members will be aware, Angus Council has duties under Section 44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to contribute to reducing Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions; to contribute to helping Scotland to adapt to a changing climate; and to act in the way that it considers most sustainable.

In 2012, Angus Council adopted its Climate Change Strategy 2012-216. This outlined how the Council would meet these obligations and was delivered through a programme of constantly evolving projects with annual progress reports.

4. CURRENT POSITION

Public bodies are legally obliged to ensure that they embed carbon reduction, sustainability and adaptation (adapting to changing climate), into all of their operations. The Angus Council area contributes to greenhouse gases associated with climate change and is directly affected by the impacts of severe weather events, such as excess rain and flooding. As a signatory to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration, the Council has committed to taking action and leading by example.

Angus Council's commitment has been demonstrated through a sequence of sustainability and climate change strategies over the last fifteen years. This has been translated into action through programmes relating to climate change, such as transport, housing, flooding, development, energy and waste management. Progress has been reported publicly on carbon reduction, sustainability and adaptation. This progress has been scrutinised and governed by the Carbon Member Officer Group (MOG), comprising Councillors Jeanette Gaul, Donald Morrison and David Fairweather.

FUTURE POSITION

In 2016, public reporting on climate change became mandatory for public bodies in Scotland. The range and depth of reporting required is now much greater than in previous years as a result. In preparation for this, a self-assessment was carried out on Angus Council to measure progress against legislation and best practice. It highlighted the critical role that the Carbon MOG has played in terms of governance but recognised that sustainability and adapting to climate change also require that same level of scrutiny. For a summary of the self-assessment see Appendix 1.

The Carbon MOG has reviewed the findings and agreed the need to expand the role of the MOG to manage climate change in the round. This will essentially mean that the Carbon MOG would be replaced by a Climate Change MOG, covering all three strands of climate change work. It is proposed that the extended remit could be best supported by increasing Elected Member representation from three to six. It is recommended that membership is made up of the three Members of the current Carbon MOG and three further nominations: one from the administration group and two from the non-administration. It is further recommended that a specialist officer working group be established for sustainability, adaptation and carbon reduction, with each reporting to the Climate Change MOG. Details would be laid out in its Terms of Reference, with a potential structure outlined in Figure 1, below.

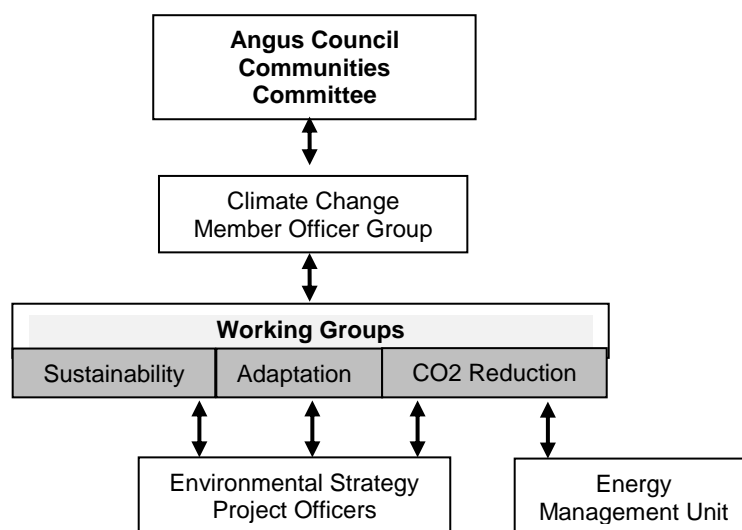


Figure 1: Potential Governance Structure

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Although the current Climate Change Strategy focuses largely on the Angus Council estate, over time, extensive work has been carried out with businesses, residents and community planning partners. The Council has also been sharing best practice with neighbouring local authorities, reflecting the cross boundary nature and scale of the impacts of changing climate. In light of this, it is recommended that the scope of the climate change strategy be extended to cover the whole of the Council area with Angus Council leading communities, businesses and partners by example.

A Strategic Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP) has emerged in recent years as a useful approach. It combines cutting greenhouse gases with coping with changing climate but has strong emphasis on maximising economic development opportunities in the process. It could focus on expansion of the sustainable energy sector, creating new businesses in energy efficiency and renewable technologies, developing local supply chains and new markets. It could also help to build resilience to severe weather and tackle fuel poverty, working with communities and all business sectors.

Neighbouring local authority areas of Moray, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire are exploring a similar approach and are keen to benefit from the economy of scale, aligning each authority's approach through an overarching North East Scotland Sustainable Energy Action Plan. Individual plans would combine to co-ordinate, enable, align and prioritise sustainable energy implementation which would place Angus and the North East Region at the forefront of Scotland's transition to a resilient, low carbon economy with the associated economic, environmental and social benefits. In March 2016, consultants were commissioned to outline the work required for each local authority to produce an individual SECAP, contributing to the regional strategy with an estimated policy completion date of April 2017.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the terms of this report.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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List of Appendices:

Climate Change Assessment Tool Summary Report