

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Waste Strategy Working Group** held Remotely on Wednesday 23 December 2020 at 10.30 am.

**Present:-**

Mr J Bruce  
Mr C Fraser  
Mr A Henderson

Mr A MacInnes  
Mr R MacWilliam  
Mrs T Robertson

**In attendance:-**

Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place  
Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Environment and Infrastructure  
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Corporate Resource Service  
Mr A McKinnie, Waste Operations Manager, Communities and Place Service  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Service

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale, Mr D Macpherson and Mr H Morrison.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. Waste Projects Update**

There had been circulated Report No WS/02/20 dated 16 December 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment during which Members were informed of progress with the Inverness, Aviemore and Fort William Transfer Stations. Regarding Waste Management contracts Project Manager informed Members that there were contracts in place until the end of 2022 and work was underway to prepare for beyond that and for the years ahead, whether or not there was an Energy from Waste (EfW) plant in Highland. Continuing, he gave a presentation on elements from the socioeconomic analysis of an EfW plant. Among the points he raised was the potential to alleviate fuel poverty in the city and to contribute towards a low carbon Highland. He explained which Heat Network opportunities would be viable and potential uses of the electricity produced. Looking ahead, further engagement with Scottish and Southern Energy and other EfW operators would continue.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- work with the Scottish Government was also continuing. Clarification of the deadline for the decision to delay the landfill ban had now been provided as 31 December 2025. While this was welcomed it remained a tight timescale given that the procurement and construction of an EfW plant would take at least 7 years. However, arrangements were underway for

waste handling in the interim with officers looking at how the residual 80k tonnes of landfill produced per year could be transported to EfW plants currently being constructed in Scotland or, alternatively, to plants in the north of England;

- operators of plants in the central belt had offered the opportunity for Highland Council to visit their sites to see the process in operation;
- the position with neighbouring local authorities was outlined;
- the option of a Hydrogen strategy had not been costed but would require additional capital investment. However, it had to be borne in mind that technology in this area was changing rapidly and there was potential for a low carbon option to be provided and to see how various types of waste could be used in different ways. Nevertheless, the hydrogen option would require the rest of the public sector in Highland to participate;
- there appeared to be a lack of partnership working between local authorities and a more co-ordinated approach was advocated. This would enable the sharing of information to help develop strategies. Given the considerable financial and environmental implications, a general national policy was required;
- officers were in the process of collecting information and data which they would present to Members for scrutiny and decision and which could include the investment required for a Hydrogen strategy;
- discussions with the Scottish Government Hydrogen Accelerator programme were taking place and reports on progress were being reported to the Climate Change Working Group;
- resources were in the process of being considered for the low carbon agenda, with a report going to March Council. It was important to ensure that the SfW project was properly resourced, with sufficient internal staff and external advice as necessary. Identifying funding for these purposes (internal and external staff costs) would also be important to ensure they could support the project when needed. All bids would be brought together to ensure there were sources of funding; and
- looking to meetings in 2021, meetings would be called as required, the frequency varying to anticipate project activity. The next meeting was expected to take place in early Spring.

The Working Group **NOTED**:-

- i. evaluation of the Inverness waste transfer station tender is in process;
- ii. the tender documentation for the Aviemore waste transfer station has been issued;
- iii. discussions to identify the most suitable site in Fort William for the waste transfer station continue; and
- iv. an options appraisal to further explore the long-term waste management options will be defined and shared with the Members' Waste Strategy Working Group in the new year.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am