

Agenda Item	3.
Report No	CCC/1/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Meeting: Climate Change Committee

Date: 16 March 2023

Report Title: Net Zero Strategy and Members Workshops

Report By: Interim Chief Executive

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the development of a Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan for The Highland Council.
- 1.2 The following reports will inform the development and delivery of The Highland Council's Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan:
- Audit Scotland briefing on 'Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change'.
 - The Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee report on 'The role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland'.

This report provides a summary of the findings and recommendations of the reports, referenced above, for consideration and comment by the Climate Change Committee.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- I. Note progress to date and the timeline for developing a Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan for The Highland Council.
 - II. Consider and comment on the recommendations set out by the Accounts Commission in the Audit Scotland report on 'Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change' as set out in Appendix 3.
 - III. Consider and comment on the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee report and the summary of its recommendations on 'the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland' as set out in Appendix 4.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - the function of the Net Zero Strategy Group and thematic groups requires significant staff time across all services. All employees and Elected Members will have a role to play in delivering Net Zero.

The financial implications in reaching carbon emission reduction targets are significant and will need to be addressed and identified for the organisation. All councils will likely need to initially invest millions in infrastructure, the decarbonisation of fleet, heat technology and buildings as well as help with skills and project development. Many of the interventions required to reach net zero will have positive financial benefits for the Council in the longer term, and there remains significant potential to lever additional public and private finance into the region to help meet our targets, particularly if a robust, evidence-based strategy can be drafted and approved. Therefore, a strategic view should be adopted, looking at whole life or forecasted longer term costs rather than the initial outlay alone.

- 3.2 **Legal** - the Council has several requirements in respect of reporting against its climate change obligations, in addition to being required to directly support Scotland's target to end its contribution to climate change no later than 2045.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - the commitment to net zero and a Just Transition will require the creation of opportunities to develop resource efficient and sustainable economic approaches, which help address inequality and poverty.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - combatting climate change is one of the most complex challenges facing the public sector. The development of an evidence-based Net Zero Strategy and a deliverable Action Plan, as well as continually monitoring progress, will be essential in understanding the Council's pathway to net zero.
- 3.5 **Risk** - Failure to proactively address the climate and ecological emergency across all service delivery carries significant reputational risk, particularly considering the political ambition at both local and national level around the climate change agenda. In addition, failure to take a proactive approach to climate change action will necessarily limit opportunities to secure external funding.

As referenced in the Audit Scotland briefing 'Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change', action is needed now to make sure that Scotland is resilient enough to deal with the impacts of the changes to the climate that are already happening. If we do not respond quickly enough to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase our resilience, severe widespread impacts are expected. This includes extreme disruption to the systems we depend on for food, water, and shelter.

- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the subsequent Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 ("the Act") introduced binding targets and legislation to reduce Scotland's greenhouse gases emissions to net-zero by 2045 at the latest with the following interim reduction targets:
- 75% below the baseline by 2030
 - 90% below the baseline by 2040

- 4.2 The national route map to net zero has been developed through a number of incremental sector specific targets which culminates in a net zero Scotland in 2045 (appendix 1).
- 4.3 To ensure and continually monitor compliance with Scottish targets, public bodies are required to submit annual Climate Change Reports (Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Annual Reporting – PBCCD). Following an amendment in legislation, in completing the PBCCD report, public bodies are now required to report their **target date** for **zero direct** emissions, for reducing **indirect emissions** and how they will **align spending plans and use of resources** to deliver reduction targets. To date, the Council has not set a target for achieving net zero.
- 4.4 The term net zero means achieving an overall balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and emissions taken out of the atmosphere. This balance – or net zero – will happen when the emissions we add to the atmosphere is no more than the amount removed.
- 4.5 To reach net zero, emissions relating to fleet, waste and energy use across our estate will need to be reduced (which will reduce the emissions put into the atmosphere). However, in some areas, it will be too complex to cut emissions altogether. These ‘residual’ emissions will need to be removed from the atmosphere: either by changing how we use our land so it can absorb more carbon dioxide, or by being extracted directly through technologies known as carbon capture, usage, and storage.
- 4.6 Scottish Government has stated that public bodies should prioritise reducing emissions over using emission offsets (such as through tree planting); ultimately offsets should only be used for areas where emissions are not avoidable due to a lack of technical alternatives. Highland Council will be required to demonstrate that any direct emissions it is offsetting are unavoidable, and all direct emissions that can be reduced to absolute zero have been.
- 4.7 Any organisational net zero target must:
- Be clear on what is in scope of the target
 - Should cover all of the organisations’ scope 1 & 2 emissions and appropriate areas of scope 3
 - Have interim reduction targets at set periods that align to the Scottish Government interim target years as set out in Appendix 1; and
 - The use of natural sequestration or carbon offsetting to achieve net zero targets should be mapped out, and the ‘residual emissions’ that will be sequestered should be estimated as part of net zero planning. Residual emissions must be as small as possible and any assumptions, and uncertainties clearly explained.

Defining scopes:

Scope 1 - direct – GHG emissions from sources owned or controlled by the Council (e.g., gas boilers within buildings, fleet vehicles).

Scope 2 – indirect - emissions from the generation of purchased energy used by the Council. The Council has control over the use of this energy, but the emissions generated from its production are created elsewhere.

Scope 3 – indirect other - emissions that occur due to the council’s activities / products / services, but at assets not owned or controlled by the council (e.g., commuting, travel for work in employee-owned vehicles or public transport, purchased goods and services).

5 Developing the Council’s approach to Net Zero

- 5.1 A Net Zero Strategy Group comprising officers working across Council services has been established to lead on the development of a net zero strategy and action plan for the Council.
- 5.2 Workstreams are being taken forward by thematic groups with each team developing the evidence base within their respective service area to enable the drafting of the relevant section of the overall strategy. Thematic Group leads sit on the Strategy Group thus ensuring a two-way flow of information.
- 5.3 [Guidance](#) has been published by the Scottish Government and the Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) which will assist the Council in the development of its approach. It is proposed that briefings from Audit Scotland (outlined in section 9 of this report) and the recent report by the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee (outlined in section 10 of this report) will also inform the development and delivery of the strategy and action plan.

6 Thematic Groups

- 6.1 The table below provides an overview of thematic group leads and workstreams for each group:

Thematic Groups	Service Lead & support from Climate Change & Energy Team (CCET)	Workstreams
Built Estate & Energy	Head of Property & Facilities Management CCET: Energy Manager	Energy efficiency of estate – Strategy for reducing energy consumption. Rationalisation (cuts across behaviour change). Strategy implementation low carbon heat. On site Renewable Generation.
Social Housing/HRA estate	Head of Housing & Building Maintenance CCET: Project Manager (Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme)	Energy Efficiency – Fabric First. Carbon reduction high level route map. Asset Monitoring – Utilising smart control.

		Strategy implementation low carbon heat.
Fleet & Staff Travel	Head of Operations & Logistics, C&P CCET: Climate Change Coordinator (Transport)	Strategy for decarbonising fleet. Strategy for developing infrastructure. Fleet Rationalisation. Strategy for removal of grey fleet.
Waste & Circular Economy	Strategic Lead for Waste Strategy & Operations CCET: Climate Change Coordinator	Strategic reduction of internal waste. Develop a vision for Circular economy. Strategy to reduce food waste throughout public sector buildings and services.
Procurement & Community Wealth Building	Strategic Procurement Manager CCET: Climate Change Coordinator	Strategy for sustainable procurement. High level understanding of greenhouse gases from supply chain. Identify and educate on key carbon hotspots linked to procurement. Assessment of spend categories in capital projects considering carbon in design.
Planning, Land Use & Environment	Service Lead Environment Development & Active Travel CCET: Climate Change Coordinator	Strategy for offsetting and natural sequestration. Strategy dealing with effects of climate change. (Adaptation) The Development Plan. Transport strategy.
Capital Programme & Net Zero Funding	Depute Chief Executive	Development of process to align capital programme with net zero strategy.

	CCET: Salix Fund Manager	Identify and develop funding streams to align with net zero strategy. Develop investment strategies that unlocks the net zero opportunity.
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7 Timeline

7.1 The Net Zero Strategy Group is working towards the timeline outlined in the table below:

Activity	Timeline
Climate Change Committee workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members will have an opportunity in advance of the Climate Change Committee meeting to review and finalise the high-level strategy and route map, including the setting of target dates. 	18 th April 2023
Climate Change Committee meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To formally consider and approve the high level strategy including both interim and statutory targets as part of the Council's route map to net zero 	17 th May 2023
Develop fully costed action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for consideration by Climate Change Committee on 5 December 2023 	By end of 2023

8. Member workshops

8.1 The Climate Change Committee is responsible for the oversight of the Net Zero Strategy, Action Plan and Programme, including setting and scrutiny of performance targets.

8.2 At the Climate Change Committee meeting on 3 November 2022, Members agreed that a series of workshops should be scheduled to provide Members with an in-depth knowledge of the work being developed across each Net Zero thematic group. The sessions were intended to also ensure elected Members were fully briefed on the challenges and complexities of delivering net zero within each thematic strand and how they impact on each other in the delivery of The Highland Council's net zero strategy. Developing this level of understanding will enable the committee, at pace, to scrutinise the work as a complete body of work providing constructive input into the delivery of the action plan, key performance milestones and in delivering a realistic pathway to net zero.

8.3 **Member Workshop, 7 February 2023**

The following thematic groups presented to Members on 7th February:

- Social Housing/HRA
- Fleet & Staff Travel
- Procurement & Community Wealth Building

8.4 **Members Workshop, 6th March 2023**

The workshop originally scheduled for 21st February, was rearranged for 6th March, with the remaining four thematic groups presenting to Members:

- Built Estate & Energy
- Capital Programme & Net Zero Funding Strategy
- Waste & Circular Economy
- Planning, Land Use & Environment

A copy of the presentations and recording of both workshops can be found on the Members' Intranet. A summary of Member attendance at the workshops is appended at Appendix 2.

8.5 **Member Workshop, 20 March 2023 – Adaptation**

Alongside the Council's actions to reduce emissions, we also need to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change. There is a separate report on the Climate Change committee agenda providing broader detail and context on the Council's approach to adaptation. The aim of workshop on 20th March is to provide members with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the national, regional, and organisational context of climate change adaptation; what the Council is already undertaking in terms of adaptation actions; and what needs to happen next.

9. **Audit Scotland – Scotland's Councils' Approach to Addressing Climate Change**

9.1 As part of the Member workshop on 7 February, Audit Scotland presented the findings and recommendations of the [briefing](#) they prepared for the Accounts Commission on Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change. This was followed by a Q&A session. A copy of the presentation and recording of the workshop can be found on the Members' intranet.

9.2 The briefing highlights that this is the crucial decade of action for climate change and that Councils have a critical role in helping Scotland to achieve its national climate change goals. This includes managing their own activities, estates, and assets, while demonstrating leadership to tackle climate change across their local area and helping their communities to adopt low carbon lifestyles. Climate change must therefore be central and integral to all Council activity.

9.3 The briefing shows there are significant differences in the targets councils have set and that greater clarity is needed about what's included in targets and how councils will deal with residual emissions to achieve Net Zero. Council climate change action plans must also be clearer about gaps and challenges. It covers the approaches of Councils to date and highlights some of the work from individual Councils, including case studies on areas considered good practice. It also highlights that action will need

to involve collaboration across all parts of government and society to bring about the required transformational change. It also states that climate change will be an ongoing area of interest for the Accounts Commission through its annual audit, Best Value, and performance audit work.

9.4 The briefing also highlights that action will need to involve collaboration across all parts of government and society to bring about the required transformational change. It also states that climate change will be an ongoing area of interest for the Accounts Commission through its annual audit, Best Value and performance audit work.

- I. Ensure clear and transparent emissions targets are in place
- II. Increase action on adaptation and climate resilience
- III. Make action plans clear about the gaps and challenges that remain
- IV. Increase collaboration efforts
- V. Embed climate change into decision-making at all levels

Appendix 3 contains a table of suggested actions by Audit Scotland in respect of the five recommendations. It also sets out progress to date made by the Council and areas to be considered as part of ensuring the Net Zero Strategy aligns with the Audit Scotland Recommendations.

10. Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee - the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland

10.1 On 23 January 2023, the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee published its [report](#) on the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland. The report highlights that Scotland will not meet its ambitious target of being net zero by 2045 without a more empowered local government sector, with better access to the skills and capital it will need to play a full role in this energy revolution, and a clearer understanding of the specific role the Scottish Government wants it to play in some key delivery areas. The main conclusion of this report is that Councils need more help, however the Committee also recognised that in some areas, there is more Councils could do to help themselves.

10.2 The Committee wants to see clearer evidence of all Local Authorities planning strategically for net zero and ensuring that net zero goals and Council budgeting are aligned. The Committee recommends the Scottish Government works with COSLA to audit the effectiveness of Councils' net zero-related strategic planning and for Councils to ensure they "show their working" in their strategic plans, demonstrating how they propose to reach their targets.

10.3 A summary of the conclusions and 25 recommendations for the Scottish Government within the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee report can be found in Appendix 4. It will be for the Scottish Government to determine what, if any, actions it considers are needed in response to the Committee's recommendations.

Designation: Interim Chief Executive

Date: 1st March 2023

Author: Fiona Daschofsky, Project Manager, Climate Change & Energy Team; Neil Osborne, Climate Change & Energy Team Manager

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Scottish Government route map

Appendix 2 – Members Workshops Attendance

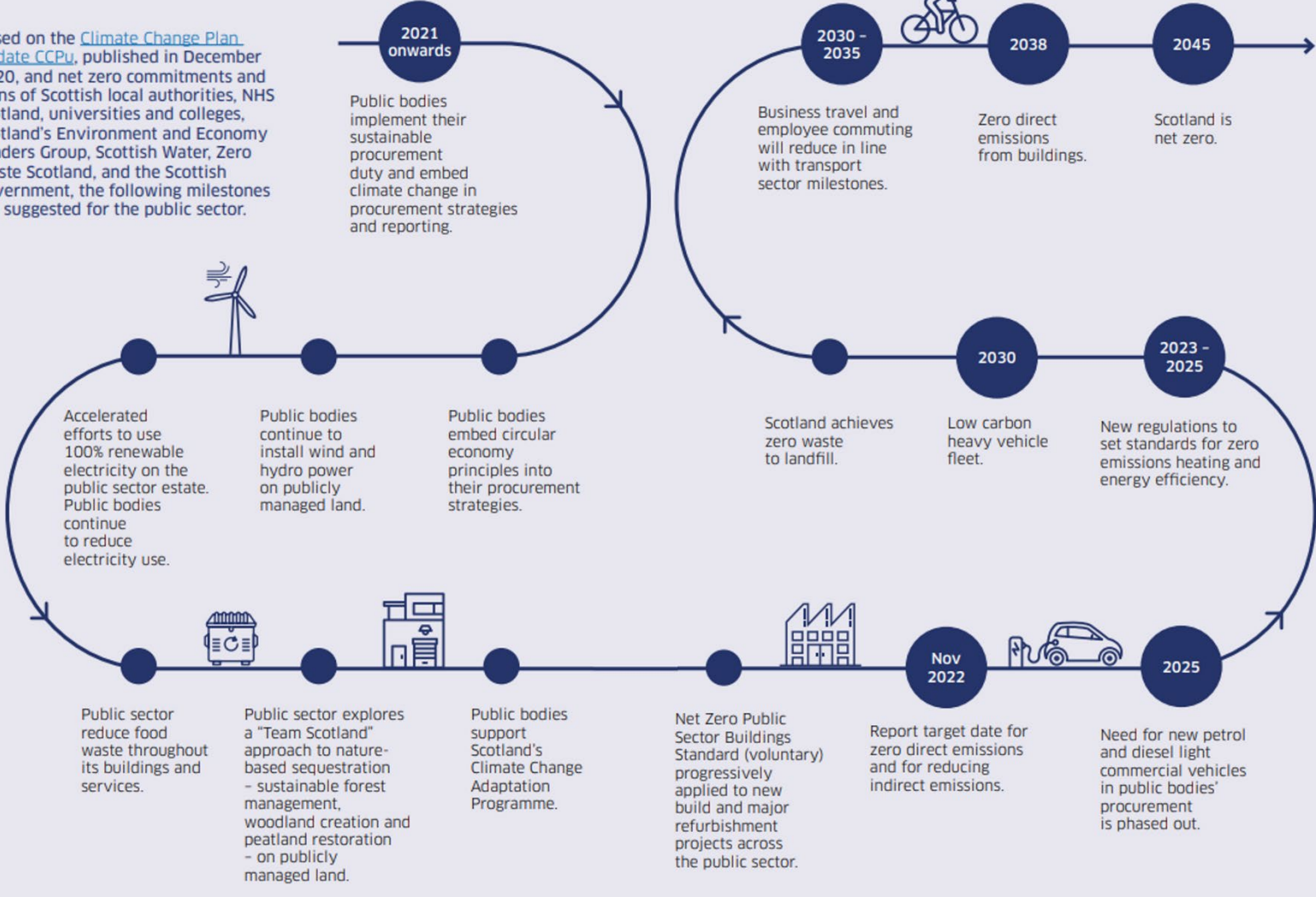
Appendix 3 – Audit Scotland – Scotland’s Councils’ Approach to Addressing Climate Change

Appendix 4 - Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee - the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland

Appendix 1 – Scottish Government route map

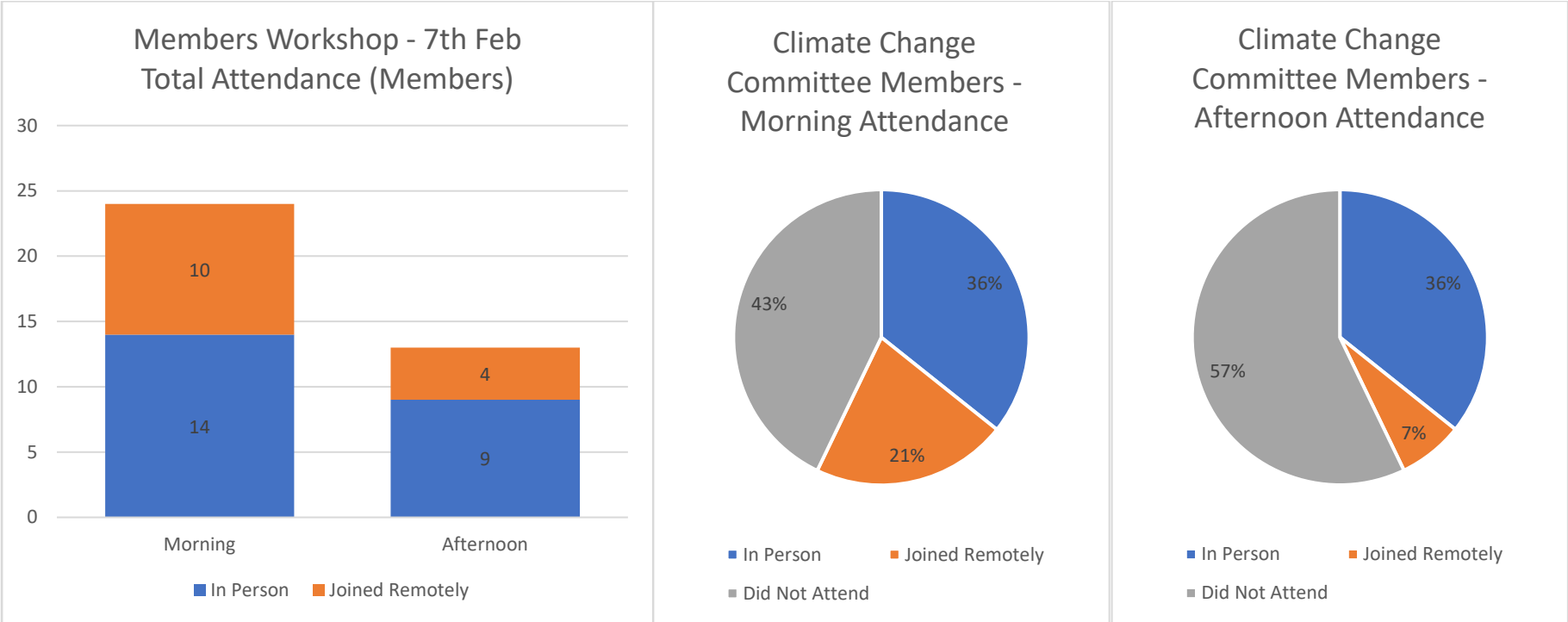
Public Sector Leadership on the Global Climate Emergency

Based on the [Climate Change Plan Update CCPu](#), published in December 2020, and net zero commitments and plans of Scottish local authorities, NHS Scotland, universities and colleges, Scotland's Environment and Economy Leaders Group, Scottish Water, Zero Waste Scotland, and the Scottish Government, the following milestones are suggested for the public sector.



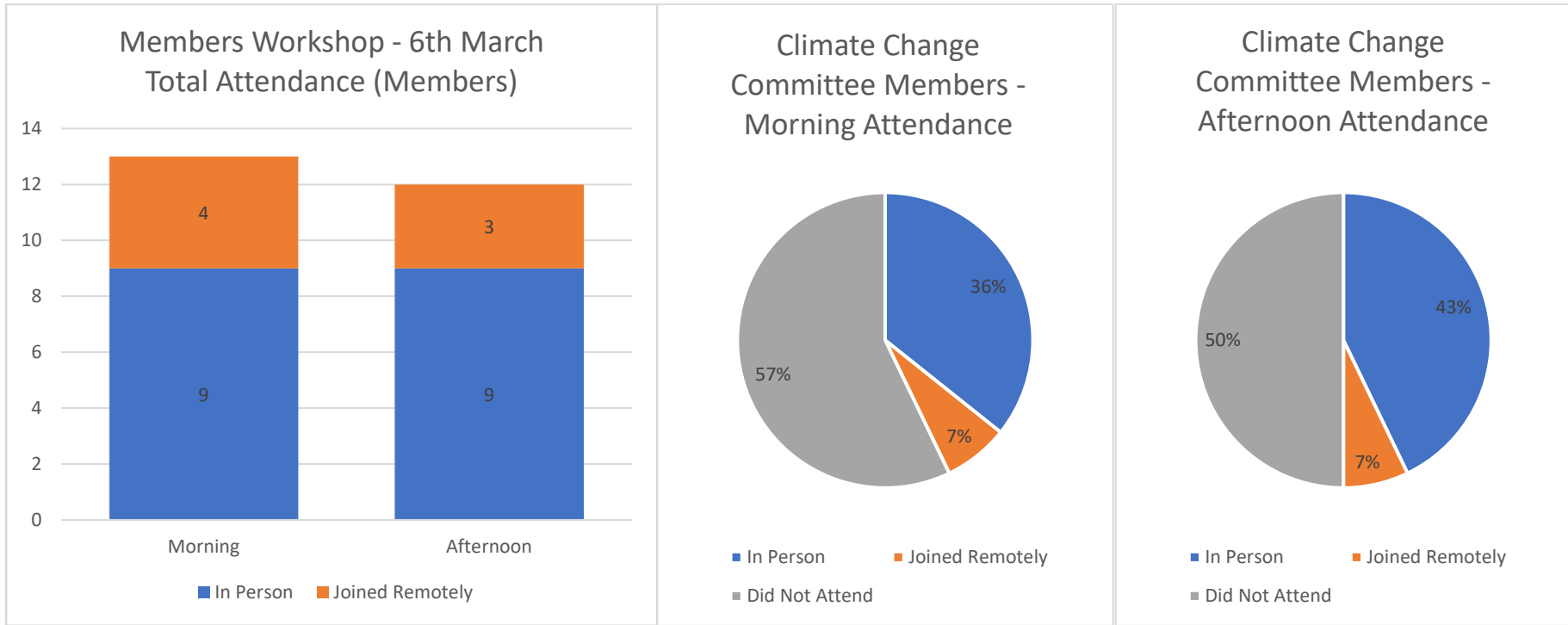
Appendix 2 – Members Workshops Attendance

7th February 2023



26 Elected Members attended the morning session, whilst 13 Members attended the afternoon session. Of the 14 Climate Change Committee Members, eight attended the morning session, whilst six attended the afternoon session.

6th March 2023



13 Elected Members attended the morning session, whilst 12 Members attended the afternoon session. Of the 14 Climate Change Committee Members, six attended the morning session, whilst seven attended the afternoon session.

Appendix 3 – Audit Scotland – Scotland’s Councils’ Approach to Addressing Climate Change

Recommendations for Councils to consider:

1. Ensure clear and transparent emissions targets are in place

To help achieve this, councils should consider taking action to:	Progress to date / areas to be considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy
Be clear and transparent about what is and is not included in corporate and area-wide targets	Highland Council is currently benchmarking corporate wide carbon emissions to establish areas of focus for the setting of corporate wide targets. Area-wide targets are not currently part of the remit.
Be clear and transparent in policies about how the council will deal with residual emissions if net zero or carbon neutral targets are in place	The development of the strategy focuses on the reduction of carbon emissions across the Council. How the Council deals with residual emissions will require alignment with Scottish Government guidance.
Utilise appropriate interim targets to ensure ongoing progress can be measured and monitored effectively	Interim targets are being considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy. Final recommendations will be presented at the Members Workshop in April for inclusion in the strategy.
Regularly report progress against targets in a clear and transparent way	This is completed on an annual basis as part of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting (PBCCD).

2. Increase action on adaptation and climate resilience

To help achieve this, councils should consider taking action to:	Progress to date / areas to be considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy

Set interim targets with clear performance indicators to ensure focus on adaptation goals	Development of Adaptation strategy underway which will include the setting of interim targets with clear performance indicators.
Develop an overarching adaptation plan which pulls together all the council's actions and allows an assessment of the impact of these actions	A Climate Change Risk & Opportunity assessment will be carried out by the Council as part of the development of the Adaptation strategy and this will allow us to measure progress.
Ensure adaptation and climate resilience are considered in decision-making	Highland Council is currently considering introducing an Integrated Impact Decision Making tool – adaptation and climate resilience will form part of this.
Regularly report progress against actions in a clear and transparent way	This is completed on an annual basis as part of the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Reporting (PBCCD).

3. Make action plans clear about the gaps and challenges that remain

To help achieve this, councils should consider taking action to:	Progress to date / areas to be considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy
Regularly update action plans. Given the scale of the emergency and the speed at which action is required, an annual review of actions would help to ensure that the actions identified are the most effective options	The Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan will be a living document which is refreshed in alignment with an evidence-based approach. A system and schedule for monitoring and reporting progress will be developed as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.
Include detailed route maps to achieving climate goals	A route map will be developed as part of the Net Zero Strategy.
Include details on the extent to which individual actions in the plans will impact on climate goals for reducing emissions and adapting to climate change, so the scale of the challenge can be clearly seen	This will be addressed within the Strategy and Action Plan.

Improve information on costs and budgets of action	A fully costed action plan will be developed. The amendments to the reporting requirements as outlined within the PBCCD report require the Council to better align its spending and use of resources to contribute to reducing emissions.
Ensure the co-benefits or potential negative impacts of net zero actions and adaptation actions on each other are clearly understood	As part of the Net Zero strategy, the Council is adopting an evidence led approach to both mitigation and adaptation.

4. Increase collaboration efforts

To help achieve this, councils should consider taking action to:	Progress to date / areas to be considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy
Work with partners to further develop existing support networks to ensure learning and good practice is shared across the sector	The Council is currently working in conjunction with the Scottish Sustainable Network and Scottish Cities Alliance to develop best practice. In addition, the Council is also working with a number of organisations including Zero Waste Scotland, Transport Scotland, Sustrans, NatureScot, NHS, SNIFFER, and the Highlands & Islands Climate Hub.
Work collaboratively to tackle some of the key challenges involved in defining and setting targets and monitoring progress, combining resources where it is more effective to do so, and focusing on maximising impact and adding value	While the Council recognises the need for combining resources, this needs to be fully explored as part of the development of the Net Zero Action Plan.
Work collaboratively with local communities and ensure that people are able to effectively contribute to the design and delivery of climate change actions	The Council is an active partner in the Highland Adapts initiative, which is a partnership approach to building a climate-ready Highland. They are bringing Highland communities, businesses, land managers and public sector together to facilitate transformational action.

5. Embed climate change into decision-making at all levels

<p>To help achieve this, councils should consider taking action to:</p>	<p>Progress to date / areas to be considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy</p>
<p>Ensure senior level buy-in and leadership by integrating climate change into their strategic priorities and setting out accountability arrangements</p>	<p>The thematic group approach for developing the Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan has been designed to encourage participation of senior leadership in the development and delivery of the Council’s Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Further involvement of senior management has been identified as a priority in enhancing the Council’s approach to addressing the Climate Emergency.</p> <p>The Climate Change Committee was established in recognition of the strategic significance of the climate and ecological emergency at Highland, national and international levels.</p>
<p>Integrate climate change into key overarching organisation annual reports and plans</p>	<p>Accelerating the Council’s actions to address the climate and ecological emergency is one of the Council’s five Strategic Outcomes and is reflected in a number of the priority actions contained within the Programme. There is an identified need for service level reporting to fully embed climate change across the organisation which is being explored as part of the development of the Net Zero strategy.</p>
<p>Ensure climate change is fully integrated into existing governance and business processes, including risk management and internal audits</p>	<p>Governance will be considered as part of the development of the strategy to ensure climate change is fully aligned with business processes. This is key to ensuring the Climate</p>

	<p>Change agenda is fully embedded across all Council services.</p> <p>Climate Change and the Ecological Emergency is included in the Council's Corporate Risk Register.</p> <p>The Auditor General and Accounts Commission are developing a programme of work on climate change. Audit Scotland, the Council's new external auditors, will be looking at climate change as part of their work.</p>
<p>Develop mechanisms to ensure that the potential impacts of policies on climate change goals is considered fully in decision-making</p>	<p>This will be considered as part of the development of the Net Zero Strategy. One approach to addressing this would be through the implementation of an Integrated Impact Assessment tool.</p>
<p>Assess whether the council has sufficient capacity, skills, and knowledge to support effective decision-making on climate change and to implement the necessary actions by, for example, carrying out a skills and competencies review</p>	<p>This can only be fully determined in conjunction with the development of a fully costed action plan for the Council's journey to Net Zero.</p>

Appendix 4 - Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee - the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland

Summary of the conclusions and recommendations for the Scottish Government within the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee report:

1. Work with COSLA to audit the effectiveness of Councils' net zero-related strategic planning and data-gathering, and to promote and embed best practice in mainstreaming net zero planning into Council decision-making.
2. The above should include:
 - a. Ensuring that Councils' strategic planning and major budgetary decisions are consistent with net zero goals and promoting climate change budgeting.
 - b. Ensuring that those within Council administrations who lead on climate change and net zero are embedded within senior leadership.
 - c. Promoting models of Council leadership on net zero.
 - d. Promoting best practice in the way Councils fulfil their statutory reporting duties – this includes introducing a formal duty requiring Councils to report area-based targets.
3. Consider the Climate Change Committee's call for a comprehensive and detailed roadmap for delivery of net zero in key areas, such as heat in buildings and transport. This should give Councils far more certainty about the roles they are to play in these areas and about any additional resources or powers to do so.
4. The Committee recognises that Local Authorities are already under financial strain to deliver core services and that the need to respond to the climate emergency is placing a further heavy burden upon them. The Committee welcomes the Scottish Government's proposal for a "new deal" through dialogue with local government but states that any new deal, and associated reforms, must comprehensively address how Councils are to be supported in delivering on net zero.
5. The above should address the following:
 - a. The Committee recognises that Scottish Government resources are finite but there should be a frank acknowledgement that Councils will not fully deliver on net zero without some additional financial support in their core funding. Scottish Government should, in future annual budget cycles, set out how it will allocate additional resources to help Councils contribute to national net zero targets.
 - b. Note and act on evidence that the system of challenge funding for net-zero projects is frustrating, hard to navigate, often too narrowly defined and out of keeping with a place-based approach to tackling net zero which is now recognised as best practice. Additionally, the short-term nature of much challenge funding actively works against the long-term goal of achieving net

- zero. Support a system of larger, fewer, and more flexible funding streams for net zero related projects at local level.
- c. More work is needed to build mutual confidence between Local Authorities and potential investors through any initiatives such as the Green Investment portfolio.
 - d. Set up a local government-facing "climate change intelligence unit" dedicated to liaising with the sector and working with the Sustainable Scotland Network to provide specialist help and advice to help meet national net zero targets. Planning, procurement, building standards and environmental assessment have been identified as areas where such assistance is likely to be most needed. Specialist advice and assistance to local government in its engagement with institutional investors on major capital funding is also required.
 - e. Respond to views that local government procurement (or public procurement generally) places undue weight on short-term economic benefit rather than long-term sustainability and investigate whether relevant guidance requires to be updated. Clarify what provision Scottish Government anticipates making in forthcoming legislation on the circular economy to ensure greater consistency between procurement and net zero goals.
6. Clarify whether additional powers or levers are amongst those matters being considered in talks on a new deal and provide an update on plans to introduce an infrastructure levy and views on how this could assist Councils in funding net-zero compatible capital projects.
 7. Work with the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB) on strengthening its role as an enabler of greater cooperation between local government and private investors. Provide more detailed proposals on the role of the Scottish Future Trust.
 8. Work with the UK Government and relevant Councils to re-examine whether net zero goals are built into current City Region Deals and, where necessary, seek to add achieving net zero by 2045 to existing Deals as one of their strategic outcomes.
 9. Provide an update on its work with the Royal Town Planning Institute on creating an apprenticeship scheme for planners and comment on whether it has considered supporting planning being treated as a STEM subject within the tertiary education system.
 10. Provide an update on its dialogue with the planning profession about expanding permitted development rights.
 11. Consider setting up a short-life working group on renewable energy within the planning system to examine how to better expedite and rebalance the renewables projects applications process.

12. Respond to concerns raised that limitations on grid capacity are increasingly putting planning applications for renewable projects at risk. Share any dialogue with regulators and the UK Government about ensuring that the Grid increases its capacity in anticipation of increased need, in order to enable a smooth energy transition.
13. A detailed Scottish Government implementation plan is urgently needed with regards to decarbonising heat in buildings. This should set out the role the Scottish Government expects local government to play and any additional resources or powers that will be made available to them.
14. Issues that an implementation plan must address include:
 - a. Revamping of funding streams to be more accessible and less short-term, and to incentivise a place-based approach to heat decarbonisation.
 - b. Address how Local heat and energy efficiency strategies (LHEES) will be used to help implement the area-based approach and clarify councils' role in relation to district heating networks.
 - c. Work on a strategy to attract private investment and set out how local government is to be involved.
 - d. Set out what specific assistance will be available to councils with a large component of rural housing and to island councils where there are additional challenges in relation both to decarbonised heat and retrofitting and where some national targets do not currently appear realistic.
 - e. The new National Public Energy Agency should be empowered and resourced to play a strategic and coordinating role in heat decarbonisation with Local Authorities including promoting best practice, guidance, and skills development in retrofitting older properties.
15. Support a stronger Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) model to help enable positive behavioural change. RTPs should be empowered and resourced to achieve a more joined up and strategic approach to public transport and active travel at regional level.
16. Determine whether a step change in the number of Council-run bus services is part of its vision for a decarbonised transport sector, with 20% fewer kilometres of road mile use per annum. If so, what further changes would be needed to enable Councils to make use of the new power.
17. Work with COSLA to champion best practice in EV charging point roll-out across all Councils as an integral element in a place-based approach to spatial planning. This should include work to assess consumer preference (for instance, what level of demand there is for slow versus fast chargers).
18. Work with COSLA and with Zero Waste Scotland to further refine a national waste strategy that reflects ambitions to achieve lower and more consistent recycling rates across Scotland's Local Authority areas, in line with net zero targets.

19. Support the strategic provision of key infrastructure and place-based approach in Councils meeting more stringent waste targets that achieve positive synergies between waste management and other net zero goals.
20. Consider how nature-based solutions to climate change can be better exploited by addressing the lack of resource and expertise at local levels. The Committee asks the Scottish Government:
 - a. Whether it agrees that a local government-facing climate intelligence service, including specific expertise in environmental management, would help Local Authorities make more effective use of nature-based interventions.
 - b. To respond to concerns that relevant funding streams are insufficiently strategic and are too resource-intensive to access.
 - c. To respond to views that key legislation in this area requires amendment to be effective or may be hard to enforce (tree preservation orders being one example provided).
21. Work with COSLA to address concerns of the Accounts Commission that Councils are not making adequate provision for adaptation and mitigation measures in their strategic net zero planning.
22. Work with COSLA to promote models of community engagement on climate change and net zero, demonstrating that effective engagement of communities is vital to embed a place-based approach to climate change and net zero at local level.
23. Audit the human and financial resources Councils are making available for climate change-related community engagement and support and agree on minimum standards.
24. Community groups have the same overall concerns as Councils about challenge funding. Fewer, larger, more flexible, and longer-profiled challenge funds would benefit Councils and community groups alike.
25. Clarify what role it envisages local place plans (LPPs) can play in ensuring communities and community groups have a meaningful say in net zero-focussed planning and place-making, now that LPPs have become part of the planning system. Respond to expert evidence that additional resource will be needed to ensure that community engagement at the preparation stage is meaningful.