

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Economic Development Sub DATE 30/03/09

CORPORATE DIRECTOR Abigail Tierney

TITLE OF REPORT Covenant of Mayors

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks approval for Aberdeen City Council to become a formal signatory to the "Covenant of Mayors". The Covenant of Mayors is an ambitious initiative of the European Commission to bring together the mayors of Europe's most pioneering cities in a permanent network to exchange and apply good practices across these cities and to improve energy efficiency significantly in the urban environment. The Covenant of Mayors involves a formal commitment to go beyond the EU objectives of reducing CO2 emissions by 20 percent by 2020. This is to be done through enhanced energy efficiency and cleaner energy production and use. Up to now some 375 towns and municipalities have signed up, with an aim to have 1000 by February 2010. 12 signatory cities are from the UK; as yet there are no Scottish participants.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the sub-committee:

1. Approves that Aberdeen City Council becomes a signatory to the Covenant of Mayors.
2. Approves travel for Lord Provost and an officer to attend the annual meeting in Brussels.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Costs for the Lord Provost to attend the annual meeting of the Covenant of Mayor will be met from the Lord Provost's travel budget.
- Costs for an officer accompanying the Lord Provost will be met from the relevant Service budget.
- Costs associated with work on Climate Change will be met by relevant services from within existing budgets or spend to save budgets.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Activities and Actions of Covenant of Mayors

The overall requirement for participation is that Aberdeen City Council signs up to a commitment, that it will look to go beyond the objectives set by the EU for 2020 to reduce CO2 emissions by 20%. This commitment will be outlined within a "Sustainable Energy Action Plan" (SEAP) that will be developed by signatory cities to ensure that there are real practical strategies in place to ensure this commitment is acted upon and achieved.

In principle, it is anticipated that most SEAPs will include actions in the following sectors:

- Built environment, including new buildings and major refurbishment;
- Urban equipment;

- Transport and urban mobility;
- Citizen and, in general, civil society participation;
- Intelligent energy behavior by citizens, consumers and businesses;
- Land planning.

The target set by the Covenant of Mayors is for a SEAP to be submitted within the year following the formal act of signing up to the Covenant of Mayors.

Preparation of a baseline emissions inventory is seen as one of the main areas of work for the sustainable energy action plan, with the baseline year for this calculation being left open to the individual city. It will be the baseline that is used to measure performance, in meeting the 2020 targets.

As part of Aberdeen City Council's Carbon Management Programme for the Council's own operations, a baseline emissions inventory was created based on a 2002/3 baseline. This will be revised later in 2009 as a routine review of the Programme. Aberdeen City Council will also exceed the European target of a 20% reduction in CO2 emissions from its own activities. This inventory would be suitable for a SEAP and acceptable to the Covenant of Mayors.

Other Commitments relating to Covenant of Mayors

- Adapt city structures, including allocation of sufficient human resources, in order to undertake the necessary actions
- Submit an implementation report at least every second year after submission of the Action Plan for evaluation, monitoring and verification purposes;
- Share our experience and know-how with other territorial units;
- Organise Energy Days or City Covenant Days, in co-operation with the European Commission and with other stakeholders, allowing citizens to benefit directly from the opportunities and advantages offered by a more intelligent use of energy, and to regularly inform the local media on developments concerning the action plan;
- Attend and contribute to the annual EU Conference of Mayors for a Sustainable Energy Europe;
- Spread the message of the Covenant in the appropriate Fora and in particular, encourage other Mayors to join the Covenant;

Links to Existing Council Activities

The activities of the Covenant of Mayors tackle most of the 14 challenges outlined in Aberdeen Cities "Community Plan". It is in the areas of the Community Plan relating to Land Use and Environment, Clean City, Transport and Connections, and Aberdeen Image that are the most obvious areas linking with the Covenant of Mayors.

Many of the aims of "Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking", particularly in the area of Economic Development, Transport and Environment have a direct link to the activities of the Covenant. This can be seen more explicitly in the following actions quoted from Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking:

Economic Development

- Continue to promote Aberdeen as the Energy capital of Europe and seek to lead in the field of renewable energy

Transport

- Work to improve public transport in and to our city, including supporting Aberdeen Crossrail and the introduction of appropriate bus priority measures
- Encourage walking and cycling in our city, including introducing more safe routes for cyclists and introducing more mandatory 20mph speed limits in residential areas

Environment

- Minimise the impact of council activities on the environment, including a target of being carbon neutral overall by 2020 and a commitment that all new council developments will be carbon neutral
- Support the use of small scale renewables and make appropriate use of small scale renewables in all new council developments
- Support the use of innovative methods of treating wastewater, including reed beds, and make appropriate use of such treatment methods in new council developments
- Adopt ambitious targets for recycling and composting, including a target of 40% of household waste being recycled by 2011
- Introduce at an early date the collection of recyclables from tenements, extend the network of 'bring' sites', extend the range of material which are collected for recycling and improve recycling services for small business

Single Outcome Agreement

- National Nos 14 - We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.

Delivery of Improvement Plan

No 2 SL - Reduce the local and global environmental impact made by Aberdeen City and Aberdeen City Council

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Due to the actions primarily being carried out or intended to be carried out by the Council through existing activities it is felt that while there would be a need to re-orientate existing work, to be packaged in a SEAP and thus appropriate for participation in the Covenant, there would be minimal additional demands on existing human resources.

Aberdeen City Council is part of the North East Climate Change Partnership - The partnership comprises Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils, NHS Grampian, other north-east public sector organisations, universities and representatives of the business community. A key role for the partnership is to raise awareness of the opportunities, as well as the responsibilities, for all residents and organisations in the north-east in tackling the challenges presented by climate change.

6. REPORT

Aberdeen City has and continues to be a leader nationally in the area of mitigating and adapting to the effects of Climate Change. It was because of this reputation that it was asked to be involved in the Carbon Trust's pilot scheme in 2002 to develop a "Local authority Carbon Management Programme". This Carbon Management Programme is one that has already created the necessary infrastructure within the local authority to carry out the activities of the Covenant with little new demands on the Councils activities.

European Union Added Value

To understand what the Covenant can offer to Aberdeen City we need to take into consideration the thinking of the EU institutions. The EU is increasingly focused on using as many of its fiscal and legislative powers to accelerate the transition of the EU to a low carbon economy.

This relates to the EU institutions seeing the transition to a low carbon economy as not only helping in the fight against climate change but also as an integral part of boosting the continents competitiveness in the world economy and securing future energy supply. The EU institutions therefore increasingly see its role as pushing for a green industrial revolution that will have real economic benefits. For this to happen it needs a holistic approach with direct support from local actors.

The Covenant of Mayors is The Commissions ambitious initiative to have EU cities working together in a more cooperative manner to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy uptake at a local level. The Covenants focus is to be cities, due to urban area being where most carbon emissions are produced and because they are generally the areas that have the resources and expertise to act and where action will have the biggest impact. While other initiatives and declarations have had the same objectives such as Local Agenda 21 and indeed Scotland's own "Declaration on Climate Change", where this one differs is that it has the direct backing of the EU Commission both politically and financially.

The support that will be offered by the Commission can be seen to present multiple benefits for the City and the motivating factor behind participation. This can be seen in the following areas:

- Funding and policy
- Networking and Benchmarking
- Recognition
- Wider Civic Action
- Development In the Renewable and Green Technology Sector

Funding and Policy

The most visible offer of support can be seen in the Commission financing the creation of the Covenant Secretariat as well as the allocation of resources to the Joint Research Centre to offer Scientific and technical advice to all signatory cities. While part of this support will be for the development of SEAPs it will also be to participate in innovative pilot schemes to support Covenant activities.

There is also mention in the actual Covenant document that cities and supporting structures will be informed and be involved in the preparation of future policies and funding schemes. With strong political will behind the Covenant from the Commission there is every indication that future funding programmes will look to directly relate to the activities of the Covenant. Thus being a signatory city will offer advantages in being able to seek funds for complimentary activities and influence EU policy that will have a direct bearing at a local level.

Networking and Benchmarking

Participation offers the opportunity to be part of a network of leading EU cities that offers huge potential to develop partners for other EU funded activities, learn from the best practice and to benchmark against them.

Recognition and Wider Civic Action

The Commission realises that cities are strategically placed to offer local leadership. Fundamental to this is wider recognition for their activities in the fight against climate change so as to allow for wider civic participation and buy in. This year the Mayors of 375 town and municipalities formally signed the Covenant in a glittering event held in Brussels during the EU Sustainable Energy Week. Events such as these allow for media attention and similar events and activities the Commission feels will highlight the work of the Covenant, bring it into the public domain and thus offer scope for wider civic participation.

By looking to increase wider recognition of the Covenant and the leadership role of individual cities it is felt that there is real potential to stimulate involvement from the wider community and autonomous action from business, schools, universities, community groups etc.

Economic Development in the Renewable Sector

Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy uptake and use, intrinsically creates demand and a market for green technologies which could stimulate local business opportunities and skills in this area. It also presents opportunities for tech transfer being harnessed in local research centers.

Aberdeen is working towards being a renewable energy hub due to the potential in offshore energy resources. Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group which promotes Aberdeen in this area has as its aim to make Aberdeen as well known for renewables as it is for oil. It is by taking a holistic approach to supporting the renewable sector Aberdeen that the City can work towards being as well known for renewables as it is for oil.

7. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE



8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Jonathan Robertson,
European Policy Assistant,
jonrobertson@aberdeencity.gov.uk
01224 814589

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Vibrant, Dynamic & Forward Looking
- Carbon Management Plan
- Community Plan
- Core text of the Covenant of Mayors found at:

http://managenergy.net/download/com/covenant_en.pdf