

## **The EU Covenant of Mayors and Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**

### **Purpose**

1. To update Members on recent developments relating to the Covenant of Mayors.

### **Recommendation**

2. The Executive Group is invited to:
  - i. Note the changes in scope and membership of the Covenant of Mayors;
  - ii. Note the main findings of the recent Covenant of Mayors Scotland event, and
  - iii. Discuss whether further help to local authorities is needed for those who may wish to sign the Covenant.

### **Introduction**

3. The Covenant of Mayors is a voluntary political movement for Local Authorities to commit to EU climate targets, principally the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over and above the EU targets for 2020. Since its creation in 2009, it has become the "world's biggest urban climate and energy initiative" with over 6,800 signatories. It has traditionally had a focus on climate mitigation through the implementation of a sustainable energy action plan (SEAP). Following political endorsement by the Local Authority, and formal signature, signatories agree to develop a SEAP and then to report back on progress after two years.
4. The Covenant of Mayors Office is managed by a consortium of five Local Authority networks including our EU umbrella organisation CEMR, and it is financed by the European Commission. In Scotland, the Covenant has to date been signed by Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow, and North Ayrshire with COSLA performing the role of official supporting organisation.
5. The Covenant of Mayors framework is constantly evolving. In October 2015 the Covenant of Mayors was relaunched to reflect new EU 2030 climate and energy targets and to merge with Mayors Adapt, a similar initiative dealing with climate adaptation. Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling Councils are party to Mayors Adapt having pledged to develop comprehensive adaptation strategies or to integrate adaptation to climate change into existing plans. Obligations made separately to either the Covenant of Mayors or Mayors Adapt by Scottish Councils still stand and there is no compulsion to update immediately existing commitments.
6. In practice the new 2030 Covenant of Mayors has meant that new signatories now commit to a 40% CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction target by 2030 and to develop an integrated Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP). Existing Covenant of Mayors members are encouraged to update their plans in advance of 2020. At the same time, the Covenant increased its geographical scope to create a Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa and for the Americas and Asia. It also became an official data provider of NAZCA, a United Nations platform that showcases the commitments of non-state actors to international climate action.

### **The new Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**

7. Recently the EU Covenant of Mayors merged with the United Nations Mayors Compact to launch the new combined Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. This similar (yet smaller) UN initiative was championed by the former New York mayor and media tycoon Michael Bloomberg acting as UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change. The Compact was a coalition of Mayors and city representatives committed to decreasing carbon emissions and building capacity for climate resilience.
8. It is intended that the new merged UN-EU Covenant of Mayors will provide a common platform bringing together relevant data on cities' energy and climate actions currently reported to the platforms supporting the EU Covenant and Compact of Mayors. By creating the biggest global coalition committed to climate leadership, it is hoped that cities and Local Government will have more visibility within the UN climate negotiations. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is scheduled to go live at the start of 2017.
9. While this merge has some obvious synergies as it brings together the UN and the EU and includes not only energy but wider climate change commitments, there was little advance notice of this development and no discussion with either signatories or supporting organisations, hence COSLA will assess in coming months what are the practical implications of bringing this new agreement forward in Scotland as well as COSLA own continued engagement.

### **Covenant of Mayors Ambassadors**

10. In June 2016, an inauguration ceremony was held at the Committee of the Regions for the newly appointed Covenant of Mayors Ambassadors. Not only will the ambassadors promote the initiative in their respective Member States but they will become climate ambassadors committing to promoting local and regional climate action. They will also have a role in representing the Covenant of Mayors at major events on national and international level such as the next UN Climate Summit (COP22) in Marrakesh this December. Indeed as part of that meeting the EU Committee of the Regions (COSLA nominates and supports four members) will organise a Cities Summit to discuss how partnership working across levels of government can expand and improve the membership of the Covenant. The UK Covenant Ambassadors are Cllr Kevin Peel, Member of Manchester City Council and Cllr Judith Wallace, Member of North Tyneside Council.
11. In addition to continue funding the secretariat of the Covenant the European Commission has indicated that as to deliver the Paris summit climate agreement specific support would be provided for the development of the integrated global Covenant of Mayors, but also the establishment of a "one stop shop" for Local Authorities. The aim will be to give Local Authorities further practical tools to contribute to the low carbon transition.

### **The Covenant of Mayors Scotland Event**

12. COSLA organised a Covenant of Mayors Scotland awareness-raising event in February 2016 for participating Councils and those who may wish to consider membership and to scope the potential and challenges of current membership. It was a well-attended event that sought to support Councils in their low carbon sustainability work by exploring Scottish best practice and collaborative approaches with other authorities, public sector partners and academia. The Covenant of Mayors Office presented recent developments, outlined the methodological framework and detailed the integration of climate mitigation and adaptation activities through SECAP development. The City of Edinburgh Council outlined the extensive local sustainability agenda in the city and Dumfries and Galloway

Council discussed efforts to put environmental protection at the centre of Community Planning.

13. The Covenant of Mayors is both voluntary and flexible and there are options to join as a consortia. Neighbouring Councils can join as a group of signatories and submit a joint sustainable energy plan which either commits to the 40% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target on individual or collective basis. Therefore, Intercommunale Leiedal, a regional development association, participated as event speakers to outline the collective approach of 13 Belgian municipalities working together. Furthermore, the Institute for Future Cities, based at Strathclyde University spoke to delegates about the role of academia and the possibility of working with students for data collection and analysis. COSLA officers are happy to provide the detailed minutes of the Covenant of Mayors Scotland to any Member that requests so.

### **Potential Issues for Scottish Councils**

14. In Scotland, we of course do not have Mayors, and therefore it is important to stress that *to join the Covenant of Mayors you do not require a Mayor or to be a city authority*. The EU strongly stressed that the Covenant is open to all Local Authorities made up by democratically elected representatives, whatever their size or stage of implementation of their energy and climate policies. The name of the Covenant is merely presentational and just reflects that in most European countries there are mayors. In other European countries Mayors often perform a broad role with some similar duties to that of a Chief Executive, Council Leader and Lord Provost/ Provost. Following political endorsement by the Council, which is the crucial first step, any Elected Member in Scotland could take forward Covenant of Mayors engagements. In this regard, COSLA is able to acquire formal confirmation from the Commission on behalf of individual Scottish Councils.
15. Some UK Local Authorities have been outsourcing the development of SEAPs and therefore there is indication that additional know-how and capacity is required. In particular, SEAPs require a Baseline Emission Inventory that maps out CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, identifies main sources of emissions and details potential reductions. This can be a resource intensive activity. In the North of Scotland, four Local Authorities have come together to tender for the development of a North East Scotland Sustainable Energy Action Plan. It is intended to serve as a functional document for the North East region and for each individual Local Authority while being aligned to the EU Covenant of Mayors requirements. Some Local Authority officers have also been keen for a SEAP/SECAP support club to be developed in Scotland.
16. Through consultation with Members, COSLA Brussels Office identifies and advances issues experienced by Scottish Councils to the Covenant of Mayors Office. We are based in the same building as the Covenant of Mayors which facilitates things. For example, sometimes language used in the guidance can be quite technical and it has in the past been difficult for officers to develop a sound estimate of staff time and related costs, guidance for which is not provided. While our resources are limited we are keen to continuously ensure Scottish Local Authority representation, lobby for tailored consideration, while making the case that sustainable energy action planning is done by Scottish Local Authorities as part of a wider matrix of climate action.
17. Scottish Councils already undertake mandatory public climate change reporting (Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009) and voluntary reporting (Scottish Climate Change Declaration). Therefore a good deal for the reporting for the Covenant is already carried out by Councils. The benefit of joining the Covenant is that its reporting would bring together all available data and low carbon projects and activities into a single document allowing Councils to outline their long-term vision which can be useful in seeking wider political and community support. That said it is a resource intensive exercise so part of that

work can be shared between local authorities, CPP partners and environmental networks such as SSN.

18. In terms of capacity building for officers, the Covenant of Mayors Office provides technical advice, templates, online workshops, and allows for networking and peer-to-peer learning, and which COSLA can facilitate. However the Covenant does not automatically lead to EU funds, but increasingly it is becoming a requirement of applying to EU programmes (Intelligent Energy Europe for example). It is also at the forefront of new and innovative climate financing tools such as green bonds, CO<sub>2</sub> credits and crowdsourcing. Given that the new Covenant is both an EU and United Nations programme it is relatively unaffected by Brexit. Indeed there is the case to press the UK to provide sufficient funding for the UK Covenant signatories as they are delivering UN commitments that the UK has formally signed to.

### **Position for COSLA**

19. The Covenant of Mayors is considered a great example of Local Authority lead innovation and leadership and a successful way to connect global ambition and local action. COSLA is the official Covenant of Mayors supporting organisation in Scotland because the Covenant framework supports local decision making and multi-level governance. COSLA is happy to work with Councils to support applications, facilitate meetings and feedback or troubleshoot issues. If members wish it COSLA could look to organise an event in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions and the Covenant of Mayors Ambassadors targeted specifically for Elected Members.

### **Conclusion**

20. This report provides information on the Covenant of Mayors which is a voluntary political movement for Local Authorities to commit to EU climate targets, principally with the aim of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This report provides information to members on developments related to the Covenant and seeks member views of whether COSLA should assist member's councils with the process of signing the Covenant. This could involve the organisation of an event in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions and the Covenant of Mayors Ambassadors targeted specifically for Elected Members.

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