

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance & Resources Committee
DATE	8 May 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	International Travel
REPORT NUMBER	CR&E/24/159
DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	Julie Wood
REPORT AUTHOR	Jim Johnstone
TERMS OF REFERENCE	GD 5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for a visit to Rome in May 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Approves the Lord Provost plus one officer to attend the Vatican Summit: From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience, in Rome between 15-17 May 2024.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In response to Pope Francis' call for urgent action in relation to climate change, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (of the Vatican) have organised a 3-day summit at the historic Casina Pio IV in the Vatican Gardens. Invited are a range of experts and scholars including city mayors from around the world to provide examples and highlight best practice in relation to climate adaption and resilience.
- 3.2 The summit will focus the three pillars of mitigation, adaptation and societal transformation, with discussion around the following themes:
- Impact on energy, food, air, water,
 - governance
 - addressing climate change
 - financial resilience
 - equity and a just transition
- 3.3 Through the World Energy City Partnership (WECP), of which Aberdeen is a founding member, the council has been invited to attend, this recognises the involvement of cities in leading the responses to climate change around the world.

- 3.4 This is an excellent opportunity, in a global context, for Aberdeen to reinforce its Net Zero Vision and accompanying reputation as a global leader in the development of renewable green energy, highlight the opportunities for investment in the city and region, the delivery of the city's Vision through its Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap, Climate Adaptation Framework and allied place-based strategies, including the drive for a Just Transition.
- 3.5 At the committee meeting on 30 January 2024, members adopted the following criteria to appraise the benefits of international engagement and activities, including the overseas travel and conference attendance proposed to support these activities, the following criteria are considered:
1. Engagement aligns with and reflects relevant aspects of the Regional Economic Strategy. This may be through the opportunity to promote regional strengths (energy, skills, entrepreneurship and innovation); to address regional challenges (economy diversification, skills and labour supply, city centre redevelopment); to support delivery of objectives; or to progress growth and internationalisation of key and nascent North East industries (energy, food and drink, finance and business services, tourism, creative, digital and life sciences).
 2. Engagement creates opportunities to attract inward investment to Aberdeen, again in line with the Regional Economic Strategy.
 3. Where appropriate, overseas travel is supported by SDI, DBT, Scottish or Aberdeen and Grampian Chambers of Commerce, and/or city stakeholders (e.g. Opportunity North East, Net Zero Technology Centre, Energy Transition Zone Ltd).
 4. WECP attendance at AGM and Board meetings.
 5. Activity with MoU partners where attendance by Elected Members is requested and has been discussed with Co-leaders.
- 3.6 Based on these criteria, the overseas travel proposed in 2.1, aligns to criteria 1 and 2.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As this trip is additional to those approved by committee in January 2024 approval is required in relation to the proposed travel to Rome which is estimated at up to £2,000. The costs for will be met via a mix of Civic and Climate & Environment Policy Service budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Scottish Government guidance details that travel and subsistence expenses may be claimed by Elected Members for approved duties, including *“the carrying out of any other duty approved by the local authority, or anything of a class so approved for the purposes of, or in connection with, the discharge of functions of the local authority or any of its committees of sub-committees.”*

5.2 Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure best value as per section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. The Council has travel policies for both members and officers. All travel should be booked in accordance with these policies to ensure cost-effective travel arrangements.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The report recommendations have a negative environmental impact, namely an increase in carbon emissions due to air travel. To minimise this we will look to book 'green' airfares only.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Failure to foster and maintain our international relationships may negatively impact economic growth, through reduced connections and opportunities for trade, export and investment for local businesses.	Aligning international activity with Scottish and UK government priority international markets for trade and exports. Aligning international activity with the Partnership's Priorities and the Council's ongoing projects in energy transition. Continued monitoring and market scanning of global advancements, particularly in relation to energy transition and net zero, to ensure we have fruitful connections	M	Yes
Compliance	Travel and accommodation bookings, and subsistence arrangements, not in line with	All travel and accommodation arrangements will be made via the Travel Team to ensure accordance with the Council's travel	L	Yes

	Council policies.	policies for members and officers.		
Operational	Safety and security risks of travel to certain locations.	<p>FCDO travel advice and any entry requirements remaining or introduced, associated with Covid-19 will be followed.</p> <p>A thorough risk assessment exercise is completed prior to any travel outside of the UK. This forms part of the pre-travel briefing.</p> <p>The Council has sufficient travel insurance in place.</p>	M	Yes
Financial	Actual costs exceed those estimated in this report.	<p>A recent costing exercise has been undertaken to inform those costs estimated in this report.</p> <p>No travel will be booked if it exceeds the total approved budget.</p>	L	Yes
Reputational	Reputational risks if the city does not actively maintain and participate in international relationships and the city's global profile as leading in energy transition will be diminished.	Fulfilling the Council's obligation in terms of WECP membership to ensure continued international profile.	M	Yes
Environment / Climate	Carbon footprint of air travel.	Travel plan has been streamlined to only include priority and necessary overseas trips.	M	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>The proposed travel/conference attendance, links to the council's rationale of establishing and maintaining international connections and networks (particularly those focused on the energy transition) for the benefit of city businesses, support the delivery of:</p> <p>Building a Greener and Sustainable City</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to deliver a just transition to net zero and plan to make Aberdeen a net zero city • Support Aberdeen's continued pioneering of Hydrogen technologies <p>A Prosperous City</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop our economy in a genuine partnership with the private sector, third sector and residents • Work with partners to stimulate sustainable economic development, including a managed transition to a carbon neutral economy and work in partnership with the academic, business, community and other relevant sectors to ensure the long-term future of the energy industry
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report will contribute to Economy Stretch Outcomes 2 and 3: international relationships which increase investment and trade opportunities for local industries and businesses will in turn, create training, reskilling and new employment opportunities.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report will contribute to Place Stretch Outcome 13: knowledge and best practice sharing with our international partner cities who hold similar energy transition agendas and roadmaps will enable us to achieve Aberdeen's carbon emission goals.
Regional and City Strategies	The proposals within this report conform with the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy, the Net Zero Routemap and the H2 Aberdeen Strategy.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	No assessment required. I confirm this has been discussed and agreed with Julie Wood, Chief Officer – City Development and Regeneration on 1 May 2024.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	Not required.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 COM/24/029 International Travel 2024/25 – 30 January 2024

10.2 COM/22/054 Climate Change – Citywide Strategy – 28 February 2022

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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