

Audit Scotland report:**Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change**

Committee Audit and Standards

Date of meeting 25 November 2022

Date of report 5 October 2022

Report by Chief Executive**1. Object of report**

To advise the committee on the issue of an Audit Scotland report titled '*Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change*' and outline the key messages and implications for SPT contained therein. Members are reminded that the full report was emailed separately.

2. Background

The report says that Councils have a critical role in helping Scotland achieve its national climate change goals, in particular reducing CO2 emissions and adapting and transforming services. Climate change must be central and integral to all council activity.

The report adds reducing the CO2 emissions councils produce is vital. Councils' corporate emissions are the largest element of all public sector emissions in Scotland. As some of the harms caused by climate change cannot now be undone, councils need to help communities mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, such as increasing extreme weather events.

The report finds there are significant differences in the target's councils have set. Greater clarity is needed about what's included in targets and how councils will deal with residual emissions to achieve Net Zero targets. Council climate change action plans must also be clearer about gaps and challenges.

The report highlights the need for:

- climate change to be embedded in the key decision's councils make;
- public bodies and communities to collaborate to address climate change;
- clear and transparent emissions plans and targets to be put in place by councils;
- an increased pace to deliver transformation in how we travel, live and work.

The full report can be found at:

<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/scotlands-councils-approach-to-addressing-climate-change>

3. Outline of findings

The key messages outlined in the report are:

- the impact of climate change is already being felt;
- this is the crucial decade of action for climate change;
- there are big differences in the targets that councils have set and their timescales for reaching net zero;
- Councils need to be more transparent about any gaps between the level of impact their planned actions will have and the scale of the challenge.
- increased collaboration across councils and with key partners and local communities is needed.

The recommendations set out in the report are:

- ensure clear and transparent emissions targets are in place;
- increase action on adaptation and climate resilience;
- make action plans clear about the gaps and challenges that remain;
- increase collaboration efforts;
- embed climate change into decision making at all levels.

The report adds that in accordance with the Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies: Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020, by November 2022, public bodies must provide in their statutory annual climate change reports:

- where applicable, the body's target date for achieving zero direct emissions of greenhouse gases, (or such other targets that demonstrate how the body is contributing to Scotland achieving its emissions reduction targets);
- where applicable, the body's targets for reducing indirect emissions of greenhouse gases;
- how the body will align its spending plans and use of resources to contribute to reducing emissions and delivering its emissions reduction targets;
- how the body will publish, or otherwise make available, its progress to achieving its emissions reduction targets;
- where applicable, what contribution the body has made to helping deliver Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

Implications from the Audit Scotland report key messages and recommendations

SPT has declared a climate emergency and is committed to Net Zero. Work is ongoing across SPT to identify measures to improve energy efficiency, reduce water consumption and minimise waste.

SPT has and continues to collaborate with key partners and local communities. SPT has increased action on adaptation and climate resilience and work is progressing to embed climate change into decision making. Arrangements are in place to meet the statutory reporting timescale.

4. Committee action

The committee is asked to note the contents of this report and the Audit Scotland report titled 'Scotland's councils' approach to addressing climate change'.

5. Consequences

Policy consequences	<i>None.</i>
Legal consequences	<i>None.</i>
Financial consequences	<i>None.</i>
Personnel consequences	<i>None.</i>
Equalities consequences	<i>None.</i>
Risk consequences	<i>None.</i>
Climate Change, Adaptation and Carbon consequences	<i>None.</i>

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