

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 8th February, 2024

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Councillors Anglin, Bower, R. Brooks,
T. Brooks, Carson, Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Kelly, Long, McAteer,
McCabe, McKeown, Smyth and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Bell.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th January, were taken as read and signed as correct subject to the amendment that Councillor Long was recorded as being in attendance at the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Doherty declared an interest in that his employer had a collaborative business arrangement with Amazon Business Services (AWS).

Amazon Web Services – Climate Data Platform Challenge update

Councillor Doherty declared an interest as indicated previously and removed himself from the meeting during discussion of this item.

Mr. Adrian Hanley, Local Government Account Manager, Amazon Web Services (AWS), attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Monitoring Learning and Reporting Officer acknowledged and thanked the teams, both from AWS and the University of Arizona, for their work in the development of a wireframe climate data capture platform. Mr. Hanley provided the Committee with an overview of the investment by AWS in the local economy, including their support provided to the business sector and charitable organisations. The Committee was informed of AWS's commitment to

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offer technical solutions to a wide range of business enterprises and also to the purchase of green energy, as part of their climate commitment, to reduce carbon emissions. He highlighted AWS's commitment to be one hundred per cent renewable, across the UK, by 2025.

Mr. Hanley reported that the Council had challenged AWS to provide a technical solution in regard to the collection, processing, analysis and communication of its climate data. To that end, the University of Arizona had been approached to develop a framework for the creation of a climate data platform using information provided by a range of teams, from across the Council, to ascertain its climate data collection and reporting requirements.

The Members were informed that, as part of that process, a seven-week engagement programme had taken place between Belfast City Council, stakeholders, AWS and the University of Arizona, to develop a prototype data capture platform. As part of the engagement programme, a graphical visual representation had been produced to illustrate how the climate data platform would be presented.

The Members were provided with an example of what a climate data platform might look like, including a range of categories which could be included with its format. Mr. Hanley provided information on the potential functionality of the data platform and how it could be used to simulate climate scenarios dependent on the input of various statistical data.

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer referred to the benefits of the climate data platform in communicating how the Council had performed, in terms of its climate ambitions, compared to other cities and stated that all data had been source identified and its integrity and accuracy verified.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to the timeline associated with the development of the data platform, the Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer stated that a business case was being prepared and that it was hoped that the software development team, within digital services, would be working on the development of a prototype climate platform, commencing in April 2024, using a range of data provided by the Council.

A Member requested information in regard to the installation of pop-up cycle lanes and the impact of that development on carbon emissions, specifically in regard to transport. In response, the Learning, Monitoring and Development Officer stated that, as the data was available a year after the data collection exercise had been completed, she would bring back information to the Committee after publication of the information requested.

In response to a further question from a Member in regard to the data platform being user friendly for those with disabilities, the Learning, Monitoring and Development Officer confirmed that, the Council had a statutory obligation to comply with its legal obligations in that regard

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Hanley for his detailed and informative presentation and he departed from the meeting.

Noted.

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**Shared Island Community Climate Action
Fund (Strand 1a) (Restricted Item)**

The Director provided the Committee with an update in regard to the involvement of Belfast City Council under the Shared Island Funding Initiative. The Members were informed that Council officers had continued to work with partner Councils in the Republic of Ireland in order to explore and develop potential project areas in line with the Shared Island Programme.

The Members were provided with an outline of the brief attached to Strand 1a of the Shared Island Community Climate Action Fund which provided the opportunity for communities/local authorities to take forward cross-border climate action projects in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland

The Committee was provided with an overview of the key elements which were eligible for funding under strand 1a, including the funding tiers which were available under the scheme and incorporating the contact details of those authorities and Community Climate Action Officers responsible for the projects and administration of the funding process.

Noted.

Belfast Agenda refresh - update

The Director provided the Committee with an update on the work which had been undertaken with stakeholders, as part of a community engagement programme in order to update priority action areas within the Belfast Agenda.

The Director highlighted the significant community engagement programme which had been undertaken to ensure that the priorities were consistent with the needs of the city and that it had both community and business support.

The Committee was provided with an outline of the detailed processes associated with each phase of the engagement and participation programme. The Director stated that the ethos associated with a compassionate city incorporated with inclusive growth were key components of the Belfast Agenda. The Members were informed of a major addition to Belfast Agenda, in terms of climate change, and the objective to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions by eighty per cent, by 2025.

The Director referred to the five themes contained within the Belfast Agenda comprising:

1. Our People and Communities
2. Our Economy
3. Our Place
4. Our Environment and
5. A Compassionate City

The Committee was informed that the Belfast Agenda did not sit in isolation from regional government policy and should be viewed in that context. The Director emphasised the importance attached to securing collaboration with partner organisations, including the

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Executive, to deal with issues such as health inequality and Community and Neighbourhood Regeneration, alongside ensuring a just transition to net-zero.

The Climate Commissioner highlighted a range of interventions which had been undertaken, as part of the Climate agenda including, the “Our Planet” area of focus, including decarbonisation projects. She referred also to the delivery of two retrofit projects in deprived areas and the operation of the Artemis net-zero ferry service.

The Climate Commissioner reinforced the need to ensure a just transition to net zero and of the need to ensure that both the public and business sectors and society, in general, were on board if behavioural change to achieve net-zero was to be achieved.

The Director reported that it was anticipated to launch the Belfast Agenda refresh on 20th March 2024 and emphasised the need for a multi-agency collaborative approach if the ambitions with the Belfast Agenda were to be realised and targets met.

In response to a question from a Member, as to reason for the restriction of the item under the heading, ‘Shared Island Community Climate Action Fund’, the Director agreed that it would be possible to disaggregate the report to exclude the commercially sensitive elements and present the modified report to a future meeting of the Committee, in a non-restricted format.

In response to a further question in regard to the lack of infrastructure for electric vehicle charging and what the Council might do to support infrastructure in that regard, the Climate Commissioner reported that the nature of lease agreements and revenue streams associated with EV charging required to be considered at a strategic level and agreed to report back to the Committee, at a future date, on how the issue identified might be progressed.

A Member raised the issue of support for community energy projects the subject matter of which which the Member had submitted a previous motion to the Council. The Member requested information on how such projects could be developed, with particular reference to the most economically and socially deprived areas of the city. In response, the Climate Commissioner stated that she would submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee on how the Council might expand and develop those projects in an endeavour to support a just transition and meet its net zero commitments.

A Member raised a question in regard to how the city might incorporate its ambitions to become net-zero, within the Belfast Agenda, and highlighted its success, to date, in that regard. In response, the Director reported that the carbon disclosure project, which had provided the city an ‘A’ rating, was a major achievement towards the recognition of the city’s green credentials. The Committee was reminded of the ‘Pathway to net zero’ being an integral part of the Belfast Agenda. The Climate Commissioner reported also that Belfast was rated eleventh in the global sustainability index, which sent a clear and unequivocal message of the city’s commitment to a sustainable, net-zero economy.

In response to a request from a Member to have a simplified graphical representation of where the Council was on its various themes contained within the Belfast Agenda and prior to a the publication of a comprehensive dashboard, the Climate Commissioner reported that, in tandem with the development of a detailed climate dashboard, the Council had undertaken

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an annual review of this progress, on its range of climate ambitions, to the Climate and Sustainability Board, which would be available for the Committee's consideration. The Director informed the Members that the Corporate Performance Management Framework was being amended and would provide a valuable insight into the Council and the progress made to deliver its climate ambitions.

Noted.

Chairperson