

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 4 th December 2024
Report Subject	Climate Change Committee Terms of Reference
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an internal audit of Climate change, sustainability and Environment, Sustainability & Governance (ESG), an action was agreed to review the Climate Change Committee's Terms of Reference to ensure it addresses the risks identified within Member oversight and challenge of the programme.

The revised Terms of Reference were presented at the Climate Change Committee in September and were supported by the committee members.

It was also taken to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee in November and was agreed by the committee members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Council adopts the changes being recommended.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REPORT
1.01	<p>As part of the agreed Internal Audit Plan, an internal audit of the Council's climate change, environmental sustainability and Environment, Sustainability & Governance (ESG) was undertaken.</p> <p>The purpose of the audit was to assess a number of risks related to the management of climate change, environmental sustainability and ESG within the Council. The audit provided some level of assurance, and also identified a number of areas where key controls were not generally adequate or effective.</p>
1.02	Within the audit, there was an identified area for further improvement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of Member oversight and challenge – The governance and reporting framework in place is not sufficiently robust - there is a risk of lack of clarity as to the role of Climate Change Committee in relation to the programme oversight and delivery. <p>The management action agreed to address this risk finding was for the Committee's Terms of Reference to be reviewed.</p>
1.03	<p>Having reviewed the Terms of Reference (Appendix 1), there is good reference to the need for the Climate Change Committee to have oversight and challenge of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan as its primary function.</p> <p>Within 9.16.5 Role and Function there are two primary objectives listed.</p> <p>The first of these primary objectives details the need to <i>'assist and advise the Council on how to become a net zero carbon emitter by 2030'</i>. By way of reiteration, this wording has been extended upon to emphasise the need for the Committee's oversight of the programme progress and action plan delivery.</p>
1.04	<p>The second primary objective draws the Committee outward to <i>'consult with, and raise awareness amongst the public, business and suppliers around carbon reduction'</i>.</p> <p>This primary objective is outward focussed and must be balanced against objective 1 to ensure that the Committee is providing the level of internal Member oversight and challenge, as has been identified as the risk by Internal Audit.</p>
1.05	<p>A third primary objective is suggested to be included <i>'to work to ensure collective cross-portfolio responsibility on climate change, including advising and assisting other committees across the Council'</i>. This objective is intended to influence Members of the Committee who also sit on other Council Committees to champion and ensure climate change impacts are considered within those Committee functions also. This addition would reinforce the Member oversight and challenge risk identified by internal audit.</p>
1.06	<p>A fourth primary objective is suggested to be moved from 'roles and functions to achieve objectives' into 'Primary objectives' <i>9.16.5.4 to consider economic, environmental and social challenges and risks arising from climate change for the Council, and others</i>. Again, this is an outward focus and would need to be balanced against objective 1 to ensure sufficient scrutiny and oversight is given to the Council's own activities and performance.</p>
1.07	<p>9.16.5.6 includes reference to the Committee continuing to develop, for approval by the Cabinet, the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan</p> <p>9.16.5.10 references the requirement to advise Cabinet on a number of aspects all related specifically to the Council's own carbon footprint.</p>

1.08	<p>The draft Terms of Reference in Appendix 1 provides adequate assurance of the responsibilities of the Committee in overseeing and challenging the Climate Change Programme.</p> <p>It is the role of the Committee members to ensure they are meeting these role and function requirements so as to provide a robust governance and reporting framework for the programme.</p>
1.09	<p>Following acceptance of the changes at the Climate Change Committee in September, the revised Terms of Reference were presented to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee in November.</p> <p>Only one minor amendment was made by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee to the draft: substituting 'achieve' in place of 'ensure' in paragraph 9.15.5.3.</p>
1.10	<p>It has been identified that the number of the redrafted Terms of Reference is not consistent with that of the Constitution. This will be addressed when the revised Constitution is formatted for publication.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Advice sought from Committee services and Governance to ensure format and wording is consistent throughout the Constitution.</p> <p>Recommendations made by Climate Change Committee at the 6th September 2024 meeting.</p> <p>Acceptance of the changes by the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee at the 6th November 2024 meeting.</p>

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>The recommendations will ensure that the Council addresses the risks identified in the internal audit report.</p> <p>Actions undertaken intend to minimise the risk of failure in the Council's ability to meet its carbon reduction ambitions.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Terms of Reference Climate Change Committee

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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	OFFICER CONTACT DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Steven Goodrum, Democratic Service Manager Telephone: 01352 702320 E-mail: steven.goodrum@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Carbon emissions: Used interchangeably with greenhouse gas emissions; meaning emissions of carbon dioxide, methane etc from human and natural activities and sources. Wider greenhouse gas emissions are collectively calculated into a ‘carbon dioxide equivalent’ displayed as CO₂e.</p> <p>Carbon Footprint: A measurement of the council’s carbon emissions during a defined period of time, given as tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e)</p> <p>Decarbonisation – Reduction of carbon emissions that result from an activity, material or product</p> <p>Greenhouse Gas/ Carbon emissions: Emissions of carbon dioxide, methane etc from human and natural activities and sources. Wider greenhouse gas emissions are collectively calculated into a ‘carbon dioxide equivalent’ displayed as CO₂e.</p> <p>Methodology: How the collected raw data used for carbon emission calculations is managed and rated in terms of its reliability. This is governed by Welsh Government.</p> <p>Net Zero Carbon: Emissions of greenhouse gases are balanced by the removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere such as by trees, peatland and carbon capture and storage technologies.</p>