

Assess Sustainability Impact of Budget Proposals

Notice of Motion

Motion received in terms of Standing Order No 20 on 7 August 2023, proposed by Councillor Kirsten Robb, seconded by Councillor Ross Clark, as follows:-

“Pre-amble: This motion is about ensuring all budget proposals meet the statutory duty to integrate consideration of carbon, climate change adaptation and sustainability into all decision-making processes.

Currently, equalities and environmental impacts of council activities are presented at budget time. However, to date, these have not included the impact on emissions that lead to climate breakdown. Council officers are now preparing a process to assess the budget for climate impact (see point 4).

Currently, however, political budget proposals do not include a broad assessment of their impact on sustainability. If this motion passes, it will recommend that all political budget motions do so. It will ensure projects which have the potential to increase emissions and impact on sustainability are properly assessed and presented and that any impacts are reduced or mitigated. This will help deliver on council plan objectives on sustainability.

Council notes:

1. The Council has a statutory duty under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 (“the Act”) to ensure that its policies, plans and strategies take account of: carbon impacts; adaptation to climate change; and sustainable development.
2. The legislation applies to everything the Council does, and requires the Council to integrate consideration of carbon, climate change adaptation and sustainability into decision-making processes, of which the annual budget development process and political budget motions are key. The council must now also include in its annual reporting “how the body will align its spending plans and use of resources with emissions targets”.
3. “Work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places” is one of the key Council policies (see Connect 2022-227) aiming to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to climate change and act sustainably. Therefore it is essential to ensure that the sustainability impact of budget proposals is properly considered.
4. The initial preparation work on the 2024/2025 Capital Programme has commenced and the council are expected to present to the next Climate Change and Sustainability Committee, an approach to assess the carbon impact of each potential new project, as well as any appropriate mitigation. The final Climate Change Impact Assessments (CCIA) will also be provided to members prior to their consideration of the capital programme for the new financial year. These assessments will form part of the overall project assessment criteria.

Council agrees:

1. That, in relation to the Council budget setting process and medium term financial plan, Councillors and the public should understand the climate / sustainability impact of spending proposals;
2. Therefore requests that Officers provide high level guidance for political groups to complete a sustainability impact assessment of their proposed budgets in the run up to the Council's budget setting process in February; and encourages all budget motions to include an accompanying statement to their proposals which sets out how their spending plans align with the Council's climate strategies, including this as an appendix."