

# The Covenant of Mayors: EC Climate Change Initiative

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## Policy and Strategy Committee

17 May 2011

### 1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the Council to become a formal signatory to the European Commission's Covenant of Mayors network and to commit to the required carbon reduction obligations.

### 2 Summary

- 2.1 The Covenant of Mayors is an initiative by the European Commission to address climate change mitigation and adaptation. Cities who sign up commit to exceeding a 20% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020. Access to European funding is then available to those cities which have become members. The initiative is challenging but does complement existing and proposed work by the Council and the initiative is recommended. Partner involvement and wider community "buy in" is needed to achieve success.

### 3 Main report

- 3.1 The Council is already committed to addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, having already signed up to the European Declaration on Climate Change, the Scottish Climate Change Declaration and various initiatives such as the 10:10 Campaign. In addition, the Council has approved an ambitious target of a carbon free Edinburgh by 2050. Climate change is also a key priority in the Council's new sustainable development strategy.
- 3.2 The Covenant of Mayors is an ambitious programme run by the European Commission (EC) and aimed at European cities committed to addressing climate change. While, the Covenant is a network to exchange and promote good practice in reducing carbon emissions, unlike other schemes it involves a formal commitment to produce a plan for a city and ultimately reduce carbon emissions by over 20% by 2020. Failure to do this results in expulsion from the scheme. Consequently there is more of a "stick" with this programme than others and thus a strong motivation to comply with the requirements.

- 3.3 Signing up to the Covenant requires a city to reduce carbon emissions through a combination of energy efficiency measures, the use of cleaner and alternative energies and also promote the transition to a low carbon economy. There are now over 500 European cities and municipalities signed up, but only two Scottish cities - Aberdeen and Glasgow are participants at present.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 details the text from the Covenant with the key requirements being to:
- go beyond the objectives set by the European Union of a 20% carbon reduction by 2020;
  - prepare a baseline emission inventory;
  - submit a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) for the city within a year of signing;
  - organise Energy Days;
  - attend and contribute to the annual Conference of Mayors; and
  - submit implementation reports every two years.
- 3.5 Exceeding the 20% carbon reduction objective is a requirement of the programme. The new Scottish Climate Change Act seeks a 42% reduction by 2020 and the English Core Cities have already agreed to exceed the UK Climate Change Act by 34% by 2020. Duties on public bodies under the Scottish Act require them to attempt to exceed the 42% target. The new sustainable development framework sets out a new target for the Council of over 40% reduction in emissions by 2020. This does present challenges but it is imperative that the Council, if seeking to be an exemplar in sustainability, responds to this challenge.
- 3.6 Signing up to the Covenant is legally binding and Edinburgh would be expelled if:
- no action plan was submitted;
  - reports in two successive periods were not submitted; and
  - the city failed to meet its overall carbon objectives.
- 3.7 In setting up the programme, the EC has committed resources to it. A Covenant Secretariat has been established as well as resources allocated to the Joint Research Centre to offer scientific and technical advice to all the signatory cities. Cities will also be able to be involved in the preparation of future policies and funding schemes. More importantly there is evidence that EC funding programmes are being directly related to the activities of the Covenant cities which have signed up to the programme.
- 3.8 Sharing good practice in this constantly changing agenda is also invaluable. Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy uptake has the strong potential to create demand and a market for green technologies which could stimulate local business opportunities and skills in the Edinburgh city region area.

## **Developing a Strategic Energy Action Plan for the City (SEAP)**

- 3.9 The Council is already refreshing its climate change framework and the development of a city wide plan can be developed through community planning and other wider networks such as business and community groups in the city. There are already links with the Transition City movement and requirements for the programme such as Energy Days could be carried out in partnership with such initiatives. In addition, a number of large and small scale infrastructure projects are underway. Signing up to the Covenant subsequently provides an opportunity to bring strands of work together in a strategic and co-ordinated way.
- 3.10 There are also challenges implied in contributing to the programme. For example economic and inward investment strategies of the Council will need to promote and secure low carbon economic development. Partner agency behaviours and investment plans will need to reflect the carbon reduction imperative, and so strong leadership will be needed to involve and commit action by other stakeholders.
- 3.11 The development of a SEAP will need to take two phases – firstly a scoping exercise setting out the major issues for energy masterplanning across the city. This is not masterplanning in the planning sense but a wider strategic approach to energy supply, demand management, energy efficiency, conservation and generation including renewables. A key issue is not to simply address the infrastructure that may be required but a fundamental approach to changing behaviour and patterns of energy consumption. It is proposed to carry out this work in partnership with City Development and Services for Communities. Issues such as planning, economic development, housing, transport and waste will be key themes. This work could be undertaken over a two month period and would be reported back to Committee.
- 3.12 The second phase of the work is the development of the actual SEAP. The Council has been offered two Masters students from Heriot Watt University to undertake their dissertations in partnership with the Council. Both these thesis will focus on elements of the SEAP – the policy drivers and the identification of actions required to address energy in the city. The dissertations would also be informed by and complementary to the energy masterplanning exercise.
- 3.13 It is proposed that a number of agencies be involved in the implementation of the SEAP including the new Edinburgh Centre for Climate Change – a partnership between Edinburgh, Heriot Watt and Napier Universities, set up as a centre for excellence in climate change research and development.

## **4 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Any financial costs for the research and development elements of the SEAP can be contained within current budgets.

## **5 Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 There are no equalities impacts arising from this report.

## 6 Environmental Impact

- 6.1 Signing up to the Covenant provides a means of co-ordinating activity across the city ultimately reducing carbon emissions and contributing positively to the Council's own targets.

## 7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The aim of the European Commission's Covenant of Mayors is consistent with those of the Council in addressing climate change and carbon emissions. The programme provides invaluable opportunities to learn from other European cities as well as providing challenging targets to be met, thus ensuring a momentum to make progress. There is also the opportunity to access specific EU funding and technical expertise.

## 8 Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) approves the Council's sign-up to the Covenant of Mayors as set out in Appendix 1; and
  - (b) agrees that a Sustainable Energy Action Plan be prepared and approved by the Committee prior to being submitted to the EU in May 2012.

**David Jack**  
Acting Director of Corporate Services

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Appendices	Appendix 1 Text from the Covenant of Mayors
Contact/tel/Email	Janice Pauwels, Carbon Climate & Sustainability Team Manager 469 3804 <a href="mailto:Janice.pauwels@edinburgh.gov.uk">Janice.pauwels@edinburgh.gov.uk</a>
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	Supports National Outcome 12 – 'We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations'.  Supports National Outcome 14 – 'We reduce the local and global impact of our consumption and production'.  Supports Local Outcome – 'Carbon emissions from the Council's own activities are reduced by 5% per annum.'  Supports Local Outcome – 'Edinburgh's overall ecological footprint is reduced'.

Background  
Papers



8.2 COVENANT OF MAYORS : Text from the Covenant

**WHEREAS**, the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change has confirmed that climate change is a reality and that the use of energy for human activities is largely responsible for it;

**WHEREAS**, on 9 March 2007 the EU adopted the Energy for a Changing World package, committing unilaterally to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20% by 2020, as a result of a 20% increase in energy efficiency and a 20% share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix;

**WHEREAS**, the European Union Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: Realising the Potential includes the creation of a "Covenant of Mayors", as a priority;

**WHEREAS**, the EU Committee of the Regions stresses the need to join local and regional forces, as multilevel governance is an effective tool to enhance the efficacy of actions to be taken against

climate change, and therefore promotes the involvement of regions in the Covenant of Mayors;

**WHEREAS** we are willing to follow the recommendations of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable

European Cities, concerning the need to improve energy efficiency;

**WHEREAS** we are aware of the existence of the Aalborg Commitments, at the basis of many ongoing urban sustainability efforts and Local Agenda 21 processes;

**WHEREAS**, we recognise that local and regional governments share the responsibility of fighting

global warming with national governments and must be committed thereto independently of the commitments of other parties;

**WHEREAS**, towns and cities account directly and indirectly (through the products and services used by citizens) for more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions derived from energy use related to human activity;

**WHEREAS**, the EU commitment to reduce emissions will be achievable only if local stakeholders, citizens and their groupings share it;

**WHEREAS**, local and regional governments, representing the closest administration to the citizen, need to lead action and to show example;

**WHEREAS**, many of the actions, on energy demand and renewable energy sources, necessary to tackle climate disruption fall within the scope of competence of local governments, or would not be attainable without their political support;

**WHEREAS** the EU Member States can benefit from effective decentralised action at local level in order to meet their commitment to greenhouse gas emission abatement;

**WHEREAS**, local and regional governments throughout Europe are reducing global warming pollutants through energy efficiency programs, including sustainable urban mobility, and the promotion of renewable energy sources;

**WE, THE MAYORS, COMMIT TO:**

**Go beyond the objectives** set by the EU for 2020, reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in our respective

territories by at least 20%, through the implementation of a Sustainable Energy Action Plan for those areas of activity relevant to our mandates. The commitment and the Action Plan will be ratified through our respective procedures;

**Prepare a baseline emission inventory** as a basis for the Sustainable Energy Action Plan;

**Submit the Sustainable Energy Action Plan** within the year following each of us formally signing up to the Covenant of Mayors;

**Adapt city structures**, including allocation of sufficient human resources, in order to undertake the necessary actions;

**Mobilise the civil society in our geographical areas to take part in developing the Action Plan**, outlining the policies and measures needed to implement and achieve the

objectives of the Plan. An Action Plan will be produced in each territory and shall be submitted to the Secretariat of the Covenant within the year following signing up;

**Submit an implementation report** at least every second year after submission of the Action Plan for evaluation, monitoring and verification purposes;

**Share our experience** and know-how with other territorial units;

**Organise Energy Days or City Covenant Days**, in co-operation with the European Commission and with other stakeholders, allowing citizens to benefit directly from the opportunities and advantages offered by a more intelligent use of energy, and to regularly inform the local media on developments concerning the action plan;

**Attend and contribute to the annual EU Conference of Mayors** for a Sustainable Energy Europe;

**Spread the message of the Covenant** in the appropriate fora and, in particular, encourage other Mayors to join the Covenant;

**Accept termination of our membership of the Covenant**, subject to prior notice in writing by the Secretariat, in case of either:

i) failing to submit the Sustainable Energy Action Plan within the year following formally signing up to the Covenant;

ii) non-compliance with the overall CO<sub>2</sub> reduction objective as set in the Action Plan, due to failure to implement or insufficient implementation of the Action Plan;

iii) failing to submit a report in two successive periods.

## **WE, THE MAYORS, ENDORSE**

**The European Commission's decision to implement and fund a structure** of technical and

promotional support, including implementation of evaluation and monitoring tools, mechanisms to

facilitate sharing of know-how between territories and tools to facilitate replication and multiplication of successful measures, within their budget;

**The European Commission's role to assume co-ordination of** the EU Conference of Mayors for a Sustainable Energy Europe;

**The European Commission's declared intention to facilitate the exchange of experience** among the participating territorial units, the provision of guidelines and benchmark examples for possible implementation, and linking to existing activities and networks that support the role of local governments in the field of climate protection. These benchmark examples should become an integral part of this Covenant, to be stipulated in its annexes;

**The European Commission's support providing for recognition and public visibility of** the cities and towns taking part in the Covenant through the use of a dedicated Sustainable Energy Europe logo and promotion through the Commission's communication facilities;

**The Committee of the Regions'** strong support for the Covenant and its objectives, in representation of local and regional authorities in the EU;

The assistance which those Member States, regions, provinces, mentor cities and other **institutional structures** supporting the Covenant provide to smaller municipalities in order that the latter may comply with the conditions set out in this Covenant;

## **WE, THE MAYORS, INVITE**

**The European Commission and the national administrations** to set up co-operation schemes and coherent support structures which help the signatories to implement our Sustainable Energy Action Plans.

**The European Commission and the national administrations** to consider the activities in the Covenant as priorities in their respective support programmes, and inform and involve the cities in the preparation of policies and funding schemes concerning the local level in the scope of its objectives.

**The European Commission to negotiate with the financial actors** to set up financial facilities aimed at aiding accomplishment of the tasks within the Action Plans.

**The national administrations** to involve local and regional governments in the preparation and

implementation of the National Energy Efficiency Action Plans and of the National Action Plans for Renewable Energy Sources.

**The European Commission and the national administrations** to support implementation of our Sustainable Energy Action Plans consistent with the principles, rules, and modalities already agreed upon, and those which may be agreed upon by the Parties for the future at the global level, in particular within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Our active involvement in the CO2 emissions' reduction could also result in a more ambitious global target.

**WE, THE MAYORS, ENCOURAGE OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO JOIN THE INITIATIVE OF THE COVENANT OF MAYORS, AND OTHER MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS TO FORMALISE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COVENANT.**