

Report of the Head of Corporate Policy and City Partnerships

## **Renewing City of York Council's pledge to the Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate Change**

### **Summary**

1. This report outlines the recommended next steps for renewing City of York Council's commitment to the Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate Change, as agreed by full council motion January 2020.

### **Background**

2. The EU Covenant of Mayors (EU CoM) was launched in 2008 and was the first European Commission initiative targeting directly local authorities and their citizens to take a lead in the fight against climate change. EU CoM signatories make a voluntary and unilateral commitment to go beyond EU objectives in terms of reduction in CO2 emissions.
3. The initiative grew significantly from 2008 into a global movement of 9,000+ local and regional authorities across 57 countries. In 2016 EU CoM was rebranded the 'Global Covenant of Mayors' (GCoM) to reflect this and all EU CoM signatories were automatically aligned to it.
4. Original core requirements<sup>1</sup>:
  - Target of 20% reduction in CO2 emissions by 2020 against a 2005 baseline through energy efficiency and renewable energy actions
  - Prepare a baseline emissions inventory showing principle sources of CO2 emissions (like buildings, municipal infrastructure, industry and transport) and their respective reduction potentials

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<sup>1</sup> Latest/updated requirements include a commitment to reducing CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030, through improved energy efficiency and greater use of renewables and increasing resilience to climate change through adaptation, as well submitting a SEAP and regular progress reporting

- Produce and submit a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) within one year of official adherence to the CoM showing how the 20% target will be delivered
  - Publish regular implementation ('disclosure') reports – starting two years after submitting the SEAP, and then every two years thereafter
  - Promote CoM activities and involve citizens and stakeholders in local energy days etc.
5. GCoM signatories sign an agreement accepting these obligations on the understanding that they would be suspended from the initiative in case of non-submission of the SEAP and progress reports within agreed deadlines.
  6. On 3 December 2009 Full Council passed a resolution committing CYC to the CoM campaign and this was followed by formal signing of the CoM pledge on 5 January 2010.
  7. A report was considered by Executive on 12 April 2011, seeking approval of a York Sustainable Energy Action Plan 2011-2020. The SEAP was based on the results of a carbon modelling study commissioned by CYC showing what measures York could take to achieve the 20% target by 2020. Following successful approval, CYC submitted its SEAP to CoM in June 2011.
  8. The GCoM website currently lists 45 UK signatories, including CYC. These are mainly regional and local government organisations. Of the 45 signatories only three are shown as fully compliant with GCoM core requirements – London, Manchester and Bournemouth. Several local authorities are part compliant and the table below shows a breakdown of the figures:

	<b>No.</b>	<b>% compliant</b>
Total UK signatories	45	
With mitigation target	45	100
With current mitigation inventory	19	42
With current mitigation plan (SEAP)	20	44
With current adaptation assessment	6	13
With current adaptation goal	8	18
With current adaptation plan	5	11

9. Whilst York is listed as one of the UK signatories with a mitigation target, it is shown as not having current mitigation/adaptation assessments or plans. Nor is there a record of 'disclosure' i.e. the submission of regular progress updates. Whilst this means York is currently non-compliant with core requirements, York is not shown as 'suspended' from the initiative.
10. City of York Council declared a Climate Emergency in March 2019 and the subsequent Council Plan 2019-2023 contained an ambition to be net Zero Carbon by 2030. In January 2020, Full Council requested that the council reaffirm its commitment to GCoM and re-engages with its core requirements.

## Recommendations

11. The following are proposed recommendations to Executive, which we would appreciate Scrutiny's perspective on.
12. Recommendation 1:
  - In line with the agreed Council motion, that the council formally signs and re-submits the GCoM pledge in full knowledge of the commitments set out in the official Commitment Document and summarised below:

My local authority principally commits to:

- Reducing CO<sub>2</sub> (and possibly other greenhouse gas) emissions by at least 40% by 2030, through improved energy efficiency and greater use of renewable energy sources
- Increasing resilience by adaption to the impacts of climate change
- In order to translate these commitments into action, my local authority undertakes to fulfil the following step-by-step approach:
- Carry out a **baseline emissions inventory** and **climate risk and vulnerability assessment**
- Submit a **Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)** within two years
- **Report progress** at least every second year following submission of the SECAP for evaluation, monitoring and verification purposes

13. Whilst not a requirement for re-engaging with the GCoM, re-submitting the GCoM pledge would provide renewed opportunity for CYC to highlight its commitment to climate action and its intention to take an evidence based and planned approach to carbon reduction that is regularly monitored and publicly reported.
14. Recommendation 2:
  - That the council commences the process of regular 'disclosure' (progress reporting), by registering with CDP (Carbon Disclosure Project) and taking part in the 'Cities 2020' Questionnaire during April-July this year. CDP is a UK based not for profit organisation and its [CDP Cities](#) reporting system provides a free and easy to use global platform based upon a simple questionnaire that allows city governments to publicly disclose their greenhouse gas emission data.
15. CDP Cities fully integrates the new Common Reporting Framework (CRF) of the GCoM and response data is shared with GCoM once it has been validated by CDP.
16. The CDP Cities questionnaire includes both qualitative and quantitative questions. Themes include:
  - Governance
  - Climate hazards, Adaptation
  - City-wide Emissions
  - Emissions reduction, Opportunities
  - Local Government Emissions
  - Energy, Buildings, Transport
  - Urban Planning
  - Food, Waste
  - Water security
17. The main benefits of reporting through CDP include:
  - Benchmarking performance against other cities
  - Compiling all environmental data in one place
  - Tracking sustainability and climate efforts annually
  - Accessing data from 800+ cities, 120+ states and regions, and 8,400+ companies.
  - Entering the ecosystem of the world's best city initiatives and programs

18. CDP offer all participating cities with dedicated support to complete the questionnaire, a range of online tools and detailed feedback. Based on the information cities provide, CDP assigns the city a score within one of four scoring bands: **Disclosure** – cities starting out in climate disclosure, **Awareness** – cities with an understanding of climate impacts, **Management** – cities taking climate action, and **Leadership** – cities demonstrating strategic best practice.
19. Cities are expected to provide a reasonably complete response overall in order to be scored accurately and fairly. In addition, the criteria in the scoring methodology encourages cities to demonstrate best practice by:
20. Assessing the city's climate risk and vulnerability assessment;
  - Developing a robust adaptation or mitigation strategy;
  - Measuring and tracking the city's emissions;
  - Working towards ambitious reduction targets; and
  - Reporting this information publicly.
  - Profiling local low carbon mitigation projects with CDP's investor network
21. Cities committed to the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy are not able to submit a non-public response.
22. CDP strongly recommend that cities commence disclosure as early as possible, and even when mitigation/adaptation inventories and plans are still in development. There are a range of online tools (like the Anthesis Scatter tool) that can provide local area emissions inventories that auto-fill sections of the CDP Cities 2020 Questionnaire.

## **Implications**

23. **Financial, legal and HR:** Resources were allocated in the council's 2019 emergency budget to enable the creation of new officer capacity to lead the council's response to climate change. Central to the work of this new team will be refreshing York's baseline emissions inventory and developing, alongside local citizens and stakeholders, an updated energy and climate action plan to help drive progress at the scale and pace required. The team will also undertake regular programme monitoring and reporting which will include disclosure through CDP every two years. The council's corporate strategy and city

partnerships team will coordinate renewal of CYCs pledge to GCoM and the initial '2020' disclosure report.

Contact Details	
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	Report approved 28/02/2020
Wards affected	All

## **Annexes**

Annex A – GCoM Pledge Letter

### Background papers

- GCom Commitment Document (available from CSCP team on request)
- York SEAP 2011-2020 (available from the CSCP team on request)