



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group held on Monday, 14 June 2021 at 10.00 am

County Borough Councillors - Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor R Lewis Councillor M Webber
Councillor S Belzak Councillor E Webster

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms L Lawson, Performance Manager
Mr C Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager
Ms L Davies, Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services
Ms E Dean, Environment Planner
Mr S Lock, Head of Energy Project Management
Mr R Wistow, Ecologist
Mr J Bailey, Head of Planning
Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction

Invited External Representatives of the Steering Group:-

Mr C Harries – Friends of the Earth

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A. Crimmings and M. Norris.

2 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

3 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2021 as an accurate reflection.

4 Draft Climate Change Strategy (2021-2025) Consultation Responses

The Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager provided the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with the findings from the recent consultation on the

Council's Draft Climate Change Strategy.

The Council's draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy had been developed to set the overall direction for the Council over the coming five years, describing its vision, purpose and ambition in respect of the Council's carbon footprint and the carbon footprint for the County Borough. It was noted that the Draft Strategy had been subject to a comprehensive public consultation over two months to 31 May 2021.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and acknowledged the work undertaken to establish the robust Strategy, which had incorporated the key topics discussed at the Group's meetings:

- Biodiversity;
- Community use of vacant/unused land;
- Waste Management Strategy;
- Local Procurement of Supplies and Services;
- Elimination of single use plastics in all Council contracts and premises;
- Taffs Well Thermal Spring;
- Transportation;
- Air Quality;
- Energy Generation;
- Nature's Assets; and
- Strategic and Local Development Plans.

One Member was disappointed to note the level of engagement by residents, despite the various online tools and platforms utilised by the Council but acknowledged the restrictions of a digital consultation process during a pandemic. The Member spoke of the importance of undertaking face-to-face consultation with residents in town centres, when safe to do so, to reach a wider audience.

Members spoke of the importance of exploring various social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, as well as utilising more traditional methods, such as email and letters to engage with a wide range of residents.

It was noted that 100% of respondents had indicated their concern about the impact of Climate Change in their local area and that that 81.9% of respondents felt that they didn't have enough information about the impact of climate change. Again, Members acknowledged that not all residents had participated in the survey to give a full picture but agreed that the information would act as a positive foundation for the Council to build upon as the overall understanding of climate change develops.

Members stressed the importance of continuing to engage, educate and involve residents in the Climate Change conversation going forward.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To note and consider the feedback received on the Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy; and
2. To request that Officers use the feedback to inform the development of the final Climate Change Strategy.

5 The Council's Carbon Footprint Project - Update Report

The Head of Energy Project Management provided an update to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with regards to the work underway on the project to develop an understanding of the Carbon Footprint of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council activities and how it relates to the wider RCT Council Net Zero and Carbon Reduction commitments.

The officer drew Members' attention to Section 4 of the report, which detailed the steps undertaken to calculate a Carbon Footprint profile for RCT Council for the Financial Year 2019-2020. Members were informed that the total footprint for Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) during the Financial Year (FY) 2019/20 had been estimated at 105,257tCO₂e and could be broken down into three separate scopes, according to the Greenhouse Gas Protocol:

- Scope 1: Direct emissions associated with the use of natural gas in buildings, fleet fuel consumption, other fuels and refrigerants (17,888 tCO₂e);
- Scope 2: Indirect emissions associated with purchased electricity in buildings (6,360 tCO₂e); and
- Scope 3: Indirect emissions associated with the embodied emissions from procured goods and services, capital goods, employee commuting, business travel, upstream emissions from scope 1 and 2 activities, leased buildings and water consumption in FY 19/20 (81,009 tCO₂e).

Members were informed of the intention for the next phases and noted that further updates would be provided to the Steering Group in the future.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update on the Council's Carbon Footprint data, which had been requested by the Steering Group at a previous meeting. The Chair commented that the data was honest and would play an integral role in reducing the carbon footprint in the various areas of the Council.

Referring to Welsh Government's substantial 'Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting Guide', one Member noted that the process for formal reporting would have considerable implications for RCT Council's future Carbon reporting obligations and also for certain aspects of the Carbon Footprint project, and queried whether there was opportunity to share best practice with other Local Authorities. The officer advised that the various reporting deadlines within the guidance were considered impractical by many Local Authorities and it was hoped that these would be amended in the near future. Members were assured that officers regularly meet with the Welsh Government Energy Service and attend the South East Wales C.L.A.W meetings, which allows counterparts to meet regularly and share information across the 22 Local Authorities.

One Member was pleased to note the inclusion of indirect emissions associated with embodied emissions. The Member questioned whether the Council were taking into consideration all projects and spoke of the energy consumption costs associated with the recent implementation of 20MPH traffic calming measures throughout the County Borough. The Member felt that such schemes would evidence the difficulty of achieving carbon targets without abandoning usual Council Policy. The officer advised that calculations are made as part of the carbon trust calculation but only at a high level. It was explained that the Council invest a vast amount of money in capital projects and therefore the figures are

higher than those with smaller capital contracts. Members were assured that from officer experience, contractors were also working on reducing their own carbon footprint and moving forward, officers would consider individual projects to calculate the embodied energy.

When questioned whether the Council's pension fund was included within the figures, the officer advised that it was not included.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the Carbon Footprint project update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group; and
2. To receive a further report in 2021 providing a further update on progress for phases 2 and 3.

6 Key Energy Generation Projects and Related Issues

The Director, Corporate Estates provided a further update to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with regards to the work underway on the development of renewable energy projects and certain other Carbon Reduction related issues.

The Director provided the Steering Group with details in respect of the following projects:

- 5MW Solar Farm Installation;
- Taffs Well Thermal Spring;
- The WBRID Challenge;
- 1.5MW Wind Turbine;
- 9MW Windfarms;
- 3MW Windfarm;
- ULEV Project;
- Carbon Reduction Programme; and
- Carbon Footprint Project.

The Chair thanked the Director for the informative update and was pleased to note the various internal officer working groups, which work behind the scenes to ensure reports are fed into the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group.

The Chair was also pleased to note that the Council were exploring opportunities to invest in a number of renewable energy projects. Referring to the Taffs Well Thermal Spring project, the Chair suggested that it would be beneficial for the Steering Group to undertake a visit to the project in the future, when safe to do so.

The Vice-Chair spoke positive of the projects detailed within the report. The Member questioned whether there was an opportunity for the Council to revisit hydro-projects which were previously discounted due to a lack of knowledge and technology at the time. The Director agreed that with new technology, it would be important to relook at the discounted projects and advised that officers would review the list and provide the Steering Group with an update in the future.

Although supportive of the report content, one Member voiced concerns that such projects would not provide a sufficient amount of energy and spoke of the slow decline in energy returns across the world.

The Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of this update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group.
2. To receive a further report on the Whole System Building Research Innovation for Decarbonisation (WBRID) if successful at the next stage; and
3. To receive further reports in 2021 providing further update on progress.

7 Electrical Vehicle Charging Strategy and Implementation

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction provided an update to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with regards to the work underway on developing a Council Strategy for Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging and how it relates to the wider RCT Council Net Zero and Carbon Reduction commitments.

The Steering Group were informed that the digital consultation had run from the 19th April 2021 to the 31st May 2021 with a total of 325 online survey responses received, together with 122 poll responses. Key findings illustrated:

- 222 places were identified as potential electric car charging points within RCT, via the embedded web tool;
- 80% of respondents to the survey currently own 2 vehicles or less;
- 55% of respondents have access to their own private off-street parking and 42% only have on-street parking; and
- At present, 83% of respondents do not currently own an electric vehicle, nor have one associated with their household.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and commented that the results of the initial consultation would act as a useful foundation in terms of measuring the public's perception of the future of Electrical Vehicle Charging.

The Chair noted that respondents had raised many of the concerns previously addressed by the Steering Group such as the feasibility and many challenges associated with installing charging points across the County Borough. The Chair spoke of the potential for a hub model in key town centre locations such as leisure centres and car parks and the surrounding infrastructure of the locations to ensure best use of the points.

Members raised concerns around the financial and pollution costs associated with electrical vehicles and in addition, they spoke of the fear factor when purchasing electrical vehicles due to the lack of supporting infrastructure currently available. The officer acknowledged the concerns and emphasised the importance of rapid chargers, which would ensure electric vehicles are charged within a short space of time, in line with putting petrol/diesel in a vehicle. When asked about the average time it takes to charge an electric vehicle, the officer advised that it is dependent on the size of the charger used. It was explained that a 22KW charger would take several hours to charge a vehicle, but a 50KW 'rapid charger' would take approximately 15 minutes.

Referring to the 222 locations, which had been identified by residents as potential electric car charging points within RCT, one Member questioned how this would be considered. The officer advised that the initial process would involve choosing the most sensible locations and targeting the resources to best

suit the needs of the County Borough.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of this Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group; and
2. To receive further reports in 2021 providing further update on progress.

8 The Queen's Green Canopy Project 2021-22

The Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services informed the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group of the Queen's Green Canopy Project and sought support for the Council to participate in the initiative to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

To mark the platinum Jubilee in 2022, Her Majesty the Queen had recently launched the [Queen's Green Canopy \(QGC\)](#), to celebrate 70 years of service to the Nation. The campaign is focused on the role of trees and woodlands in enhancing our environment and includes elements of sustainable planting and the protection of ancient woodland and veteran trees.

Members were in support of the unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee and acknowledged that the Council's participation in the project would make a positive contribution to the Council's climate change priority.

Members of the Group spoke of the need for officers to work together with individuals and community groups to send a clear message that areas identified for tree planting are appropriate for future manageability and maintenance.

One Member spoke of the need to engage with communities on the potential benefits of different tree species, such as carbon sequestration levels, the ability to habitat future wildlife and the ability to provide food for people.

Members suggested the Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, which had been a subject of vast tree loss, be considered as an area of priority.

During previous discussions, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group had noted that protecting the existing woodland, including ancient woodland, within RCT is a priority. It was felt that this approach should be maintained and for new planting in RCT is to focus on urban areas, where the greatest 'climate' benefits for local residents can be achieved, without threatening other important carbon storing and biodiverse habitats in the countryside.

The Chair thanked the Director for the report and the Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider and comment on the proposal set out in the report; and
2. That the feedback from the Steering Group is reported to Cabinet for consideration.

This meeting closed at 11.20 am

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS

CHAIR.