



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 26 October 2022 at 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor G Warren (Vice Chair)

Councillor Middle
Councillor Binning
Councillor Dunning
Councillor Emmanuel
Councillor Grehan
Councillor Hughes
Councillor G Jones
Councillor Rogers
Councillor Yeo

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr S Owen, Service Director – Streetcare
Mr R Waters, Director Frontline Services
Mr S Humphreys, Legal Services
Mr G Roberts, Integrated Transport Manager
Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer

12 Welcome

The Vice Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the Committee and informed Members that she would be chairing the meeting this evening and that the Chair had given his apologies due to illness. The Vice Chair wished him well in his recovery.

13 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Barton, E. Dunning and G. Holmes.

14 Scrutiny Research

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the research facilities that were available to Members within the Council Business Unit. Members were advised that if they have any specific queries to email them to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk.

15 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declaration of interests received.

16 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 29th September 2022 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

17 Consultations

The Chair referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis.

18 Current Biodiversity Works in RCT

The Director of Prosperity & Development presented his report to Members in respect of the progress of the 'Action for Nature' plan by the RCT Local Nature Partnership (LNP). Members were referred to Appendix 1 of the report for reference.

Following the update, Members were provided with the opportunity to scrutinise the report. A Member queried the work with schools and asked how much cooperation there is with schools. The Director referred Members to the 'Action For Nature' website and directed Members to the drop down page which provides sections specifically for schools. The Director also advised that there is an ongoing project with schools at the moment in respect of tree planting, hedgerows and habitat etc.

Discussions ensued and a Member queried whether the group covers allotments and those type of initiatives. The Member referenced schemes where groups will look after the garden for elderly home owners and queried whether this scheme was available in RCT. The Director advised that he would check with the officer around allotments and community engagement and would report back to the Committee. In

terms of allotments in general, the Director referred Members to the Action For Nature website which contains further information regarding ongoing work of the group. The Member advised that he was referring to any spare ground which is owned by the Local Authority and asked for further information on this. The Director advised that he did not have the information to hand, however, he advised that he would engage with the relevant officer and report back to Committee.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update in respect of the 'Action For Nature' by the RCT LNP and to receive further updates from the Director of Prosperity and Development into the use of allotments on Local Authority owned land.

19 **REPORT ON THE ON THE COUNCIL'S RECYCLING PERFORMANCE 2021/22**

The Service Director, Streetcare provided Members with information on the Council's Recycling Performance 2021/22 through the use of a power point presentation.

Following the presentation, Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions and scrutinise the information.

The Vice Chair thanked the Service Director for the informative report and referenced the site visit for Members to Bryn Pica. The Vice Chair referenced the Education Centre and praised the hard work being done there by officers.

Discussions ensued and a Member referred the Committee back to the previous work of the Public Service Delivery & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on improving recycling rates in our communities. With regards to the new technology available, the Member questioned when the data would be available as he was hoping it would be instantaneous. The Member also questioned when we would be able to increase its usage given the number of houses being built in the south of the County Borough. The Service Director referred Members to a pilot scheme that was run by the previous Scrutiny Committee where they trialled a problem area in Rhydyfelin and some initiatives came out of that in terms of raising awareness. However, the Service Director emphasised that they found there was no substitute for door knocking and raising awareness at those difficult locations. The RAG letter was intended to be rolled out further, however, it was down to having resources on the ground to gauge if the residents are recycling well. The plan is still to target poor recycling areas and to raise awareness and increase recycling rates. In terms of the developments in the South of the County Borough, the Service Director emphasised that they look to continually review the rounds to spread the demand on collections across the week and to ensure crews are effectively deployed.. The service continually looks at its resources and what it can meet. The Service Director advised that they will be writing to

Members and residents to advise on what changes they will be making to balance the rounds.

Discussions ensued and a Member praised the work being done at the Bryn Pica site and encouraged any Members who haven't been there to make the visit. The Member sought information on the data available between recycling rates in Rhondda, Cynon and Taf. The Service Director advised that the data shows that the Rhondda are the best recycling area. The main reason for that being that they have a bag collection for residual waste. This is restricted to two bags which in turn limits the amount of waste that residents can present for collection. This encourages greater levels of recycling. The Member then questioned that if the Rhondda is better is there a possibility of rolling this out around the rest of the County Borough. The Service Director advised that the targets for recycling set by Welsh Government (70% by 2024/25) and those set in Council Climate Change Strategy (80% by 2025) will need radical interventions and all options will need to come into consideration.

Discussions continued and a Member expressed his disappointment at not being able to make the visit to Bryn Pica and expressed his interest in going another visit being organised. The Member then queried why the Council doesn't have standard recycling bins on the High Street. The Service Director advised Members that this has been trialled previously and the bins end up full of general waste. It has therefore been concluded that it is better to sort afterwards, to recover any recyclable material, rather than invest a significant amount of money in High Street recycling bins.

Another Member referred the Committee to a scheme in Swansea where the green waste was collected and composted and members of the public can go and collect the compost free of charge. There was also a scheme where if somebody wanted a large quantity of compost, it could be delivered by a lorry and members of the public would only be charged for the transport. The Member queried if this could be rolled out in RCT. The Member also queried if there was any data available in certain areas as opposed to just Rhondda, Cynon and Taf. The Service Director advised that once the green waste is collected it is delivered to an onward processing contractor and the contractor does compost it and whether it can be sold on is a business case for that contractor. With regards to data, the Service Director advised that there are poor recycling areas within every area so it is not easy to compare. The Member asked if the Officer could come back to Committee once they have spoken to the contractor who takes the compost. The Service Director agreed on the course of action.

Another Member queried if when the fleets of vehicles come to their sell by date then the Council will go to one method for collecting waste. The Member also queried what action the Council is taking to get the quantity of recycling bags off people's property and into recycling. The Service Director advised that they do not have the powers to do anything about

bags inside of people's property unless it becomes a public health issue. The Member also queried about the plans of the service going forward in light of potential further austerity measures. The Service Director advised that going forward digitalisation is a resource efficient way to target the service's resources so it will be a more efficient way of working. He also advised in terms of a one size vehicle that's not really a driving force as they have different sized vehicles to suit different collections.

The Director of Frontline Services advised that in terms of recycling bags there are far too many recycling bags issued to members of the public, that are subsequently not used for recycling purposes in RCT, so controls need to be applied. In terms of green recycling the Director advised that they have saved 3 million single use plastic bags by implementing the reusable hessian sacks so far. So on an environmental basis alone, this is a big saving. There may be lessons to be learned from green waste that can be applied to our recycling collections. With regards to austerity and climate change, the Director advised that when it comes to recycling if we get it right and increase our recycling levels, we can save money help climate change. It is far more expensive to process waste than it is to process recycled material and it is even less costly to process food. Therefore the more we recycle the lower the processing costs and the more the planet benefits. The Director advised that we now need radical change to drive forward recycling rates again.

Discussions ensued and a Member noted that it would be interesting to see what effect having a recycling vicinity in the area has on kerbside recycling. The Service Director advised that it shouldn't have any bearing as the kerbside recycling is intended for totally different products.

A further Member expressed his concern that we are labelling one whole area as poor at recycling when there are pockets of good recyclers in every area. The Member expressed his concern that changing the system might actually make poor recycling areas worse. The Director agreed that there are pockets of good and bad recyclers everywhere. The Director advised that the challenge is to get to 80% recycling, which means everybody has to recycle every possible item under their control. The Service Director agreed. The Member disagreed and said we are being too simplistic and it needs to be analysed better than just Rhonda, Cynon and Taf. The Member also raised a problem with social housing landlords as well.

The Cabinet Member for heritage & leisure emphasised that education, consultation and communication with residents is key going forward.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to note the update.

20 Review of Mainstream School Transport

The Integrated Transport Manager presented his report to Members on the review of mainstream school transport in RCT.

Discussion ensued and a Member noted that the A465 works is a big issue in Hirwaun and an application is being considered to Welsh Government for safe walking routes. The Member noted that anything that can be done to sort out the issue would be greatly appreciated.

Another Member referred to faith schools and Welsh medium schools and queried how flexible the Council is to do better for pupils who want to stay for example in a Welsh medium school when they transition from school to college. The Member also queried where the funding will come from to support that post 16 pupil going to education.

The Integrated Transport Manager advised that the Council does provide transport for post 16 pupils. If a pupil chooses a college over sixth form and the school is nearer then the Council will provide transport to the nearest suitable school or college providing the pupils preferred choice of courses. The Member suggested that either this Committee or Education Committee need to look into this further. The Director advised that RCT offers significant choice in this regard. If a pupil has spent their life in Welsh education or in faith education then the pupil has a choice as to whether to continue their education in the medium of Welsh or in a faith setting respectively and the Council will support that. Those pupils also have the option of reverting to the nearest college where they may also be eligible for transport, subject to normal distance criteria.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** to acknowledge the update and to receive a further update regarding transport for post 16 pupil in Welsh Education.

21 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to report.

22 Chairs Review and Close

The Vice Chair thanked everyone for attending and thanked Officers for providing the Committee with such detailed reports. The Vice Chair wished the Chair well in his recovery and reminded Members that the next meeting will be held on the 15th November 2022.

This meeting closed at 6.33 pm

**COUNCILLOR WARREN
VICE CHAIR.**