



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET SUB COMMITTEE
Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee held on Monday, 3
October 2022 at 10.00 am

County Borough Councillors - Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee Members in attendance:-

Councillor C Leyshon (Chair)

Councillor A Crimmings Councillor M Norris
Councillor J Barton

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms L Lawson, Performance Manager
Ms E Dean, Environment Planner
Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction
Mr J Atkins, Graduate Officer
Ms E Brown, Graduate Officer
Mr D Carter, Graduate Officer
Ms F Edwards, Graduate Officer
Mr L Marengi, Graduate Officer

1 Welcome and Apology

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee and an apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor R. Lewis.

2 Declaration of Interest

The Director of Frontline Services declared the following interest in respect of Item 7 – Corporate Estates Energy Update: 'The report includes an update in relation to Amgen Cymru, for which I am a Director. As the report is for information purposes only, I will not need to leave the meeting'.

3 Minutes

The Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2022 as an accurate reflection.

4 Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee Arrangements

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication presented the report which informed Members of the new function of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee, following changes to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation at the Council's twenty-seventh Annual General Meeting held on 25th May 2022.

The key amendments included the Committee's new function as a Sub-Committee, its Terms of Reference, Membership, and the appointment of the Council's Climate Change Champion. The Director noted that, in addition to the above-mentioned changes to the Leader's Scheme of Delegation, the AGM also put in place a Scrutiny function for Climate Change, namely the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity was pleased to note the changes to the Sub-Committee, noting that climate priorities had been embedded into the work across the Local Authority.

The Climate Change Champion spoke positive of the report and emphasised the importance of partnership work with local community groups, which would strengthen the work of the Council.

The Chair thanked the Director for the report and the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

5 Future Work Programme

The Service Director of Democratic Services provided the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee with the proposed list of matters requiring consideration during the 2022-23 Municipal Year. The Service Director explained that the work programme would inform the work of the newly established Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee; and would allow Members of the public and community groups the opportunity to register their interest to speak at future Sub-Committee meetings on specific matters of interest.

The Climate Change Champion emphasised the need for the Council to be proactive in respect of local community groups, as opposed to there being an expectation for individuals to contact and attend the Sub-Committee meetings.

The Chair thanked the Director for the report and Members **RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee Work Programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year

6 Climate Change Carbon Footprint Dashboard

The Council's Performance Manager and team of Graduate Officers provided the Sub-Committee with a detailed demonstration of the Carbon Footprint Dashboard project. The officers spoke of the importance of the Council understanding and reducing its footprint to contribute to Welsh Government's Net Zero target.

Members were reminded that the Council had been calculating its Carbon Footprint for the past two years, but the aim of the Dashboard project was to

make accurate data more transparent and accessible, to raise awareness of the footprint and to inform conversation about the actions needed to reduce specific emissions within the Local Authority.

It was noted that although there was scope for further development, the Data Dashboard was ready to be tested as an operational tool, and that external organisations had expressed an interest in its progress to date.

The Chair recognised that developing the dashboard was challenging and timely and took the opportunity to extend her thanks to the Graduate Officers for their hard work in developing such a beneficial tool.

The Climate Change Champion recognised that the Dashboard would be a useful tool for the Council but questioned whether it would be suitable for members of the public. The Performance Manager explained that at the current point in time, the Dashboard was for internal use but, resources permitted, could be further developed to include the footprint of the wider County Borough.

The Climate Change Champion commented that she would welcome an informal meeting with the officers to discuss her queries in terms of specific definitions.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity took the opportunity to congratulate the Graduate Officers for the work undertaken and commented that it was a huge leap from the position the Council were in just two years ago.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure also thanked the Graduate Officers for the presentation. The Cabinet Member commented that the dashboard gives reassurance to the Council that progress was being made, whilst highlighting the areas which require additional work.

The Chief Executive extended his gratitude to the Graduate Officers and to the Performance Manager for co-ordinating an excellent piece of work, which was sector leading in Welsh Local Government. The Chief Executive stated that establishing the Dashboard allows Managers to review, challenge and act upon data to improve the Council's Carbon Footprint, when they hadn't been able to do so before. An example used was the ability to compare school buildings and decipher whether action can be undertaken to reduce both energy costs and emissions.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their contributions.

7 Proposed Solar Farm

The Director of Corporate Estates provided the Sub-Committee with an update on the work underway in the development of a 'Land Based Solar Farm', to be located on Council owned land located at Coed Ely, on an 84-acre 'terraced' former colliery site, near Tonyrefail. The facility will, when constructed, be an asset owned by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Director described the project as a 6MW Solar Farm, with a 1MW private wire to a local site. Due to the signing of a Non-Disclosure Agreement, the Director was unable to name the partner of the local site. The Director explained that the project had the potential to 'offset' over 1,500 tonnes of carbon per-annum and approaching 54,000 tonnes over the expected 35yr 'minimum' lifecycle of the project.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 5.2 of the report, which detailed the positive progress of the project to date, despite uncertainty within the energy market.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity thanked the officers for the work undertaken. The Cabinet Member noted the fluctuating market but commented that the proposed project was viable and would contribute to the Local Authority's carbon targets.

The Chair reiterated the Cabinet Member's comments and the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report as part of the ongoing work in response to climate change ambitions and agreed to the further progress of the project proposals, in line with the contents of the report; and
2. To receive further report(s) to provide updates on progress as/when deemed appropriate.

8 Corporate Estates Energy Update

The Director of Corporate Estates and the Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction provided the Sub-Committee with an update in respect of the work underway on the development of the following renewable energy projects and Climate Change Corporate Governance work:

- Solar farm installation;
- Geo-Thermal Technology;
- Amgen Developments;
- Wind Power Aspirations;
- Hydro Electricity Prospects;
- Carbon Reduction Programme;
- Climate Change Working Group (CCWG);
- Carbon Footprint Working Group;
- Electric Vehicle Charging & Transportation Working Group;
- Natures Assets Working Group;
- Community Activity, Comms and Engagement; and
- Built Assets & Construction Working Group.

The Director also advised that at the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee held on 29th September 2022, Members considered the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Implementation Plan and provided an update in respect of the key comments made.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity spoke positive of the report and the many projects and developments underway, which contribute to the reduction of the Council's Carbon Footprint. The Cabinet Member acknowledged that there were restraints with the grid itself, which had halted the Council's progress, but hoped that there would be a solution for more capacity soon. The Cabinet Member went on to inform the Sub-Committee of his discussions with the Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council in respect of the Mine-Water energy project. The Cabinet Member advised that there were

talks of Welsh Government and Bridgend County Borough Council establishing a toolkit of support and lessons learned for Local Authorities.

The Chair thanked the officers for the detailed update and the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee; and
2. To receive further reports during 2022 and 2023, providing updates on progress within key areas.

9 'Action for Nature': The Local Nature Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Director of Prosperity and Development updated the Sub-Committee on the progress of the 'Action for Nature' plan by the RCT Local Nature Partnership.

The Director explained that the first RCT plan 'Action for Nature' was published in 2000, which set out actions for all the national 'priority' habitats and species found in RCT, plus actions for habitats and species considered locally to be important. Following a review in 2018 and a three-year funding bid by the Wales Biodiversity Partnership to Welsh Government for financial support for LBAP partnerships, the Local Nature Plan was updated and changed from a document to a [website](#).

The Director explained that the 'Action for Nature' provides the Council with a very useful, up to date resource relating to biodiversity action and information, based on the expertise and evidence collated by the RCT Local Nature Partnership.

The Climate Change Champion commented that the Local Nature Partnership is vital for the Local Authority and for the well-being of the communities. The Member spoke of the importance of all areas of the Council working in partnership, referencing the planning department in particular, due its decisions having a huge impact on the climate change agenda.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity commented that the website was a fantastic tool and all encompassing. The Cabinet Member also wished to place on record, his thanks to Elizabeth Dean for her work.

The Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the completion of the 'Action for Nature' website by the RCT Local Nature Partnership.

10 Peatlands in RCT

The Director of Prosperity and Development updated the Sub-Committee on works relating to peatlands in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

The Director drew Members' attention to Section 5 of the report, which detailed the work undertaken by officers to gain an understanding of the peatbogs within RCT, from both local and national research. The Director explained that throughout the UK and in RCT, peatlands in the worst condition were emitting the most carbon, and even partial restoration can reduce the emissions. It was

explained that peatland condition is typically improved by raising the water-table and making them wetter.

The Director informed Members of the National Peatland Action Plan, delivered by NRW, which is a 5 year plan of peatland restoration in Wales and a recently launched a grant scheme for 22/23 to enable grant recipients to develop costed restoration projects from September 2022 until April 2023. Members learned that an application to NRW was submitted on the 30th of June 2022 for a peatland restoration planning project at Cwmparc with a total project cost of £23,866.25.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity, again, wished to place on record, his thanks to Elizabeth Dean and Richard Wistow for their work. The Cabinet Member agreed with the Director that the peatbogs were a huge store which the Council were not currently making use of and spoke positive of the proposals.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Leisure requested a site visit to the peatlands in RCT to gain a better understanding, to which the Chair agreed would be organised in due course with an invitation extended to all Sub-Committee Members.

The Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the progress reported, and endorse the proposed central objective for peatland management and the direction for future work.

This meeting closed at 11.16 am

**COUNCILLOR C LEYSHON
CHAIR.**