



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

17TH DECEMBER 2019

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS – BIODIVERSITY DUTY

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION IN CONSULTATION WITH COUNCILLOR ANN CRIMMINGS, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Cabinet with the recommendations of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which considered a report on the progress in discharging the Council's Biodiversity Duty.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the content of the report considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on the 18th November 2019 (attached as Appendix 1) and;
- 2.2 Agree the recommendation of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which is to agree to submit the report to Welsh Government on the actions undertaken to further the 'Biodiversity Duty' by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council is required to report progress in the discharge of its biodiversity duty to Welsh Government.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 contains a new Biodiversity Duty (s.6) which states that public bodies, including Local Authorities:

"...must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions".

- 4.2 A report setting out proposals for the implementation of the new Biodiversity Duty in Rhondda Cynon Taf was prepared in 2017, in consultation with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership.
- 4.3 The biodiversity duty was considered by the Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on [12th December 2017](#).
- 4.4 As part of the Council's performance management arrangements, a Service Self Evaluation (SSE) is undertaken by each Council service in the autumn to inform the Service Delivery Plans for the forthcoming year. The inclusion of a 'Biodiversity Duty' question in 2017 provided a baseline and some initial priorities for the Action Plan. The follow up question, in the Service Self Evaluation 2018, provided additional information.

5. THE CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

- 5.1 The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met on the 18th November 2019 where they received a presentation, in conjunction with the report of the Director, Public Health, Protection and Community Services, which updated Members on the progress made in discharging the Council's Biodiversity Duty. Alongside Members and key officers were two external representatives from organisations, which have previously engaged with the Council in tackling the issues associated with climate change
- 5.2 The Steering Group were informed of the key areas of the local plan, which set out proposals for the implementation of the new biodiversity of Rhondda Cynon Taf and its significance on both a local and national level.
- 5.3 A robust discussion took place in respect of the importance of creating a sustainable management solution and creating a sense of ownership in local communities, with the Group agreeing that communications would play a crucial role in promoting the message to local residents.
- 5.4 Members were pleased with the work being undertaken within Rhondda Cynon Taf and were content that the action plan sought to address and monitor the key themes, which have arisen from previous work. Therefore, it was resolved to recommend to Cabinet the submission of the report to Welsh Government.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to prepare a plan of action regarding the Biodiversity Duty and to report to Welsh Government, as set out in S.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Should the Cabinet agree the recommendation of the Climate Change Steering Group, the Biodiversity Duty Report will be submitted to Welsh Government and published on the Council's website.

- 8.2 'Action for Nature: the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Rhondda Cynon Taf' is currently being reviewed by the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership. The plan can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingChange/Countryside/Biodiversity/ActionforNature.aspx>

This work will provide an opportunity for members of the public, wildlife and community organisations, and public bodies to contribute their projects and ideas for the conservation of wildlife across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 8.3 Additional themes or actions that may arise in the future in respect of the Council's Biodiversity Duty, will be considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group in the first instance, prior to recommendations being made for Cabinet consideration.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality or diversity implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 10.1 The initial input from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership, Public Service Delivery, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee and the Senior Leadership Team, together with the Service Self Evaluation process has enabled a wide range of interests and expertise to contribute to the Biodiversity Duty Action Plan and reporting process.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 11.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. However, financial implications may arise in association with the actions the Council undertakes to comply with the Duty and these will be considered as and when necessary.

12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 12.1 The Biodiversity Duty contributes to a number of the Wellbeing Objectives within the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020.
- 12.2 Biodiversity is central to 'ecosystem resilience', which is the focus of both the Environment (Wales) Act and the Resilience Goal in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 On the 18th November 2019, the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group met to discuss the report on the progress in discharging the Council's Biodiversity Duty, which is a statutory duty of the Council to prepare a plan of action regarding the Biodiversity Duty and to report to Welsh Government, as set out in S.6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

- 13.2 At the meeting, following a number of queries, Members were content that the action plan sought to address and monitor the key themes, which have arisen from previous work. Therefore, it was resolved to recommend to Cabinet the submission of the report to Welsh Government.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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