



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 15 June 2021 at 5.00 pm.

### **County Borough Councillors - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Adams (Chair)

Councillor W Lewis	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor G Caple
Councillor A Cox	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor D Owen-Jones	Councillor S Rees
Councillor E Stephens	

### **Officers in attendance:-**

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication

Mr R Waters, Service Director Frontline Services

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive

Mr C Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager

#### **1 Apologies**

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillors G Hughes, P Jarman, J James and W. Jones.

#### **2 Scrutiny Research Facility**

The Chair advised Members of the Committee that the scrutiny research facility is available within the Council Business Unit to support Members' scrutiny responsibilities and their roles as Elected Members. Any requests should be directed to the scrutiny inbox.

#### **3 Declaration of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, County Borough Councillor J Brencher made the following declaration of personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 4, North West Cardiff Corridor Transportation Study:

"My son is a director of Transport for Wales"

#### **4 Minutes**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## **5 Consultation Links**

Members acknowledged the information provided through the consultation links in respect of open consultations, Welsh Government consultations and those matters being consulted upon by the local authority.

The Service Director Democratic Services advised that the Law Commission of England and Wales has launched a consultation on a proposed new coal tip safety regime in Wales that would replace outdated laws and improve how a range of risks with coal tips are managed. It was the intention that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to respond to the consultation in advance of its deadline in September 2021.

## **6 North West Cardiff Corridor Transportation Study**

The Service Director Democratic Services outlined the report and the intention for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to comment upon and feedback to Cabinet in respect of the North West Cardiff Corridor Transportation Study. It was confirmed that identical reports were being considered by Cardiff City Council.

The Service Director advised that the Scrutiny working group to consider the development of future transport infrastructure in response to the South Wales Metro as a result of a Notice of Motion to Full Council would resume on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to consider the responses sought by partners in 2020 alongside the information contained with the attached Cabinet report and a wider update on public transport infrastructure.

The Service Director Frontline Service presented his report which explained how due to significant growth identified along the corridor linking Talbot Green, Llantrisant and North West Cardiff, in terms of residential development and economic activity which has been highlighted by the respective Local Development Plans of both Cardiff and RCT, the NW Cardiff corridor was identified as one of the top 4 corridors and was awarded funding in 2020/21 to progress through the first stage of the WelTAG process (Strategic Outline Case (SOC)), with the outcome of the WelTAG Stage 1, being a short list of potential solutions for the corridor. It is a significant corridor which lacks real public transport options at this time.

The Service Director advised that there was already a significant amount of work being carried out such as working with Transport for Wales on the Metro to deliver 12 trains per hour to Pontypridd, 4 trains per hour to the Rhondda and Cynon Valley benefitting those communities along the route to Cardiff. Work on new stations in Treforest Estate, Upper Boat and the potential for Pontypridd North. Extensions of rail networks, Aberdare towards Hirwaun and commissioning a study looking at a Treherbert extension to Tynewydd. The Mid Valleys corridor from Porthcawl (with public transport link running along the A473 corridor towards Treforest then on to Pontypridd to Abercynon and a potential new rail link towards Treharris and Nelson using the mineral line to Ystrad Mynach with further public transport links east towards Blackwood,

Pontypool and potentially Usk.

The Porth Hub continues to be developed and Park and Ride considerations around Pontyclun, Porth, Treorchy, Trecynon and Hirwaun. The integrated ticketing project is also being considered.

In conclusion, the Service Director explained that the report is being presented under the WelTAG framework and a shortlist of options has been identified which merit further development and assessment at WelTAG Stage 2.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the report and noted the short-term and long-term public transport options that offer the best business cases in order to improve access from RCT through North West Cardiff towards the city centre.

They raised the following queries-

Members were keen to identify how the options within the report connected with the RCT LDP review in terms of whether the routes and sites already allocated in the current LDP would be protected to support the roll out of the work and ensure future funding.

Members made comments and sought assurance that:

- The proposals within the report were realistic proposals and could be delivered within the 2020-2030 timescales (It was noted that some of the projects wouldn't be implemented until the end of this decade)
- The proposals would bring economic benefits to RCT which on first glance were not evident.
- There will be a more enhanced and joined-up approach to bus and rail travel and timetables to accommodate commuters travelling later in the evenings
- The electrification of the South Wales Main Line, which did not receive funding from Central Government, could still be progressed

Members noted that the immediate economic benefits included employment and training opportunities and a joined-up public travel experience between Talbot Green, Llantrisant Industrial Estate and surrounding areas which will bring significant advantage to these communities.

The Committee commented on the number of large housing developments in the South of the County Borough which have created their own volume of traffic and is growing and sought assurance that the Council's own impact assessments are robust enough to inform its decision making. It was pleased to hear that influencing and allocating sites close to transit interchanges would be a way forward and work in tandem with the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy would develop a step change approach to the current travel movements, of which 80% of commuter travel is currently by car.

Referring to the Post Covid planning, forecasting, residents' patterns of movement and the impact on office buildings where employees are only travelling into Cardiff two days a week, Members felt there was little evidence within the report that this had been considered.

It was noted that bus journeys into Cardiff are easier with good infrastructure to support travel and residents are using their bus passes. Members were pleased that a similar infrastructure will extend to other areas of RCT but asked how, in the interim period, improvements can be made to the Bus Rapid Transit services between areas such as Gilfach Goch and Cardiff?

The Service Director alluded to the provision of priority bus lanes along the corridors to provide faster and more consistent journey times and acknowledged this may disadvantage car users, whom may be encouraged to switch to bus.

Committee discussed the benefits of electric vehicles which they considered would be more sustainable and acceptable and the importance of having available infrastructure to support the approach such as charging points close to train stations. They also noted the recent news about the development of hydrogen vehicles. Members were reminded that the Overview & Scrutiny Working Group had undertaken a review into the development of infrastructure to support low carbon vehicle ownership.

Committee spoke of the importance of consulting on the proposals with residents, so they feel included and engaged. The Service Director advised that any consultation would be wide-ranging and involve Cardiff residents and businesses as well as those in RCT via a new online engagement platform and social media as recently undertaken with the Climate Change and Active Travel consultations. He also emphasised that the proposals were long-term, and a number of schemes would come before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in time as and when necessary.

Committee **RESOLVED**:

1. To acknowledge the outcome to date of the North West Cardiff Corridor Transportation Study;
2. To request that the Service Director Democratic Services & Communication facilitate the feedback of comments and observations to the Cabinet on this matter on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021;
3. To receive further reports for future scrutiny by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## **7 Climate Change Consultation Strategy (2021-2025)**

The Service Director, Democratic Services presented his report which provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to undertake pre-scrutiny of the report on the Draft Climate Change Strategy (2021-2025) Consultation Responses.

The Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager advised that the Climate Change Strategy engagement was branded as "Let's Talk Climate Change RCT" and had been undertaken virtually through an online portal which had facilitated stories, chats short polls and videos. The Social Media team had linked the consultation to key campaigns such as 'Earth Day' to generate more interest and discussion amongst the residents, businesses, schools and Older Persons Groups that had engaged. It was hoped that face to face consultation would be

possible in the summer.

Members welcomed the 'much needed' draft Climate Change Strategy (2021-2025), which had initiated a positive debate amongst the residents and businesses of RCT. They noted the appetite for green initiatives being undertaken by numerous community groups across the county borough but stressed the importance of coordinating the good work locally to avoid a 'scattergun approach'

One Member raised concern regarding the questioning within the consultation which they found to be too 'apple pie' and encouraged only the right responses. The Member felt that more could be done to engage with residents and businesses, asking harder and more challenging questions about the dis benefits and setting priorities.

One Member was disappointed that only 56% of respondents thought that the Climate Commitments would help the Council to meet its carbon reduction targets.

The Chief Executive referred to the many actions within the draft Strategy such as supporting landlords to make their properties 'green' as long-term actions that will be implemented over the next 15-20 years. He stressed that many of the actions, however small, will contribute to the overall strategy and key to achieving targets was to engage with residents as much as possible.

Members made comments and sought assurance that ongoing climate conversations and the draft strategy would consider:

- Support for tree planting which would help mitigate against flooding;
- Community groups purchasing woodland and developing urban garden projects;
- Adopting national minimum standards for contractors and suppliers to encourage them to support the council to become carbon neutral;
- Hydro schemes;
- Appropriate infrastructure to support and facilitate home EV charging and to investigate ways to realise on-street charging, how to make this feasible;
- Early discussions with developers to install EV facilities into all new builds

In response to the queries raised, the Chief Executive advised that a strategy was being developed to ensure natural regeneration of woodland which results in 'the right tree in the right place' more so than planting and can avoid the introduction of disease. Peatbog restoration projects are also underway as a way of mitigating increased storm frequency and potentially higher rainfall by storing more water in the uplands. Restoring the many degraded peatbogs can also increase carbon sequestration in RCT.

Members were keen to applaud that new- build houses will be carbon zero but acknowledged the number of older properties and homes across the county borough that would benefit from retrofit schemes to prevent them from 'leaking

energy’

The Local Member for Taffs Well provided an update in relation to the Taffs Well Spring Renewable Energy Project which it was hoped could expand beyond the supplying the Park Pavilion and Ffynnon Taf Primary School.

Members agreed with the main themes identified within the consultation responses such as ‘everyone must play a part’ and ‘engagement and education’ with the suggestion that all councillors can play a key role in influencing their local communities and schools through their roles as School Governors.

**RESOLVED to:**

1. Provide the comments and observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to the Council’s Cabinet in advance of its meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021; and
2. Acknowledge that this is the starting point of the climate change discussions with residents and businesses across RCT with additional public engagement to follow and opportunity for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to further engage with the issues raised.

**8 Chair’s Review and Close**

The Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee summarised the key points raised from the earlier discussions around the North West Cardiff Corridor Transportation Study and from the consultation responses received from the Climate Change Strategy engagement held during April and May 2021.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked Members for their contributions to the Committee.

**This meeting closed at 6.30 pm**

**CLLR M. ADAMS  
CHAIR.**