



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**22 JUNE 2022**

**CABINET**

**THINK CLIMATE RCT**

**THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2025**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH CLLR CHRISTINA LEYSHON, CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to enable Cabinet to consider, review and approve the Council's response to Climate Change in its final Tackling Climate Change Strategy – 'Think Climate RCT' following wider engagement with residents, partners and other stakeholders, including staff.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet

- 2.1 Note the contents of this report and the Council's draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Consider the draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy as providing the framework for the Council's work to:
- a) Meet its stated carbon reduction targets for the Council and the County Borough.
  - b) Contribute to the response to the nationally declared climate and nature emergencies.
- 2.3 Agree that monitoring of the strategy is included in the Council's quarterly performance reports to Cabinet and thereafter the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.4 Agree to continue the Climate Conversation with staff, residents of all ages and backgrounds, partners, communities and businesses, using relevant and

different models of engagement so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To enable the Council to become Carbon Neutral by 2030 and for the County Borough to be as close as possible to Carbon Neutral by the same date.
- 3.2 To contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition for a Carbon Neutral public service by 2030.
- 3.3 To contribute to the Welsh Government's target of a Net Zero Wales by 2050, at the latest

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The speed and urgency of the need to take local action to contribute to the national and global response to tackle Climate Change has never been greater. Data from the World Meteorological Organisation in its [State of the Global Climate Report 2021](#) provides a summary of global climate indicators and stark information. This includes: '*the last 7 years were the hottest on record*' and '*despite setbacks from Covid-19, real time data indicates that global greenhouse gas emissions continued to increase in 2021*'.
- 4.2 Closer to home, at the Welsh Government's [second Net Zero Carbon budget in October 2021](#), the First Minister indicated
  - *"The advice from the Climate Change Committee is clear, this must be a decade of action for Wales....."*
  - *We need to make more progress in the next ten years than we have in the last 30 years, this will be difficult, but we will do it by working together".*
- 4.3 The Council has made progress in many aspects of its work to adapt to and mitigate the effects of Climate Change through the [Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group](#), established in 2019. Among other things between 2019/20 and 2020/21 the Council's Carbon Footprint reduced by 27% from as baseline of just under 100,000tCO<sub>2</sub>e, although much of which was related to the impact of the pandemic.
- 4.4 The most recent Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group on [2 March 2022](#) received a number of reports of progress across areas such as:
  - Energy Generation, including progress on a Land Based Solar Farm to be located on Council owned land, with a second scheme being driven by AMGEN at Bryn Pica.
  - Rolling out the implementation of Electric Vehicle Charging points and putting in place expansion plans.
  - Developing and improving our Network of Active Travel Routes.

- Using Geothermal heat from Wales' only Thermal Spring at Taff's Well to heat a new school building.
  - The availability of a range of schemes and grants to provide energy efficiency measures to reduce fuel poverty for RCT residents, as well as reduce carbon.
  - Finalising the business case for the development of the Bryn Pica Eco Park.
  - Progressing the calculation of the Council's Carbon Footprint.
- 4.5 Whilst recognising the progress made, Steering Group members also recognised the huge challenges ahead, were keen to increase the speed and scope of the Council's work and recognised the need for all stakeholders to work together to make a positive difference.

## **5. TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY**

- 5.1 On [21 March 2021](#), Cabinet received endorsed recommendations arising from the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group [17 March 2021](#), and approved a draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy, subject to further public consultation as set out in the accompanying Engagement Plan and pre Scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Climate Change Strategy responses at its meeting on [15 June 2021](#). Members provided feedback on the Strategy, acknowledging that this was 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.
- 5.3 [In June 2021](#) the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group received a report setting out feedback arising from social media activity and public and stakeholder consultation using mostly on line methods to accommodate the Covid restrictions in place at the time. The majority of respondents were in support of the draft Climate Change Strategy and the priorities within. However, 81.9% of respondents felt that they didn't have enough information about the impact of climate change and 100% of respondents said they were very concerned or concerned about the impact of Climate Change in their local area.
- 5.4 Members were keen to continue the Climate Change Conversation particularly as Covid restrictions lifted. Continuing uncertainty and intermittent restrictions put in place because of the response to the Covid pandemic, affected the continuity of the programme of wider engagement. However, a wide-ranging programme took place which included:
- Ongoing on-line survey through 'Let's Talk Climate' platform.
  - Face to Face conversations with residents across Council locations.
  - a series of Climate Conversations with the third sector and community groups etc.

- Staff and Management Surveys and wider opportunities for staff to contribute to Net Zero Events and the creation of a virtual 'Green Space' on Teams.
- 5.5 The overall feedback indicates that people recognise the Council's efforts in tackling Climate Change and the challenges ahead if we are to meet our goals and Welsh Government ambitions and targets. They also recognise and reinforce the need to making tackling Climate Change a priority with people agreeing that it is more important than ever that we limit our negative impacts on Climate Change. Many respondents were keen to engage and provided ideas as well as told us what they have done to at home. The detailed feedback is also being considered by services to inform their work.
- 5.6 This feedback has helped to inform and shape our final 'Tackling Climate Change' Strategy. However, it is also clear from the feedback that we need to do more, and at pace, to make sure that all our services and all our staff are contributing to reducing carbon emissions across all aspects of the Council's business so that our work contributes to the reductions in the Council's Carbon Footprint and the County Borough more widely.
- 5.7 Our programme for the next stages of Climate Conversation with residents, partners, staff and stakeholders will be implemented from early summer.
- 5.8 As well as reflecting what residents, community groups and staff are telling us, the revisions to the Strategy have also been informed by
- [COP26](#) and the resulting [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) to accelerate climate action in this decade, [COP Cymru](#) and [Wales Climate Week](#) in November 2021 and
  - the publication of the Welsh Government's first all Wales Plan: [Working together to reach Net Zero](#) & the second All Wales Low Carbon Delivery Plan [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 \(2021-25\)](#) in October 2021.
  - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, including most recently [Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability](#) and [Mitigation of Climate Change](#)
  - various Welsh Government, WLGA working groups and policies and good practice research.
  - progress from our work on the Council's Carbon Footprint(s), our ongoing climate and nature related projects across the Council and with partners.
- 5.9 The Council's Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT', set out in Appendix 1 sets the overall direction for the coming three years, describing the Vision, Purpose and Ambition as a Local Authority in respect of the Council's Carbon Footprint and the Carbon Footprint for the County Borough
- 5.10 For the Council's Climate Change Strategy to fully, and accurately, reflect the speed, complexity, interconnections and differing geographic and sectoral boundaries surrounding this work across the many different services we provide, purchase or commission, is a challenge (impossible!). In acknowledging this challenge, the aim is for the Strategy to provide a Framework for our work. Further, by integrating the Climate Change Strategy

with the priorities contained within the Corporate Plan, we will ensure that it reaches all services of the Council so that reducing carbon and contributing to tackling Climate Change becomes business as usual and ensures that it is cascaded more widely throughout the organisation as everyone plays their part.

## **6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 6.1 An Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment has been completed. This Assessment reflects the wide range of subjects contained within the Strategy which is described as a 'framework' for the more detailed work which will be developed in lower level plans that will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Carbon reduction ambitions. The main findings are set out below.
- 6.2 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010, local authorities are required to have due regard to the need to:
1. eliminate unlawful discrimination;
  2. advance equality of opportunity and
  3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3 The Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act and in doing so contributing to the national Well-being goal of a more equal Wales, required by the [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)
- 6.4 The Climate Change Strategy contains high level and wide ranging commitments that recognise the impact of Climate Change. The commitments contained therein seek to introduce action to **Mitigate** Climate Change by for example reducing our emissions through new and emerging technologies and to take steps to **Adapt** to life in a changing climate through a better understanding local risks that we are currently facing, and which will continue. The Climate Change Strategy embeds the sustainable principle of taking decisions that meet our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs across the four aspects of Well-being of Wales described in the Well-being of Future Generations Act, i.e. economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. The Climate Change Strategy will direct the work across the Council and will include enabling people to access training and jobs in the new and emerging 'green' technologies and so support the alleviation of poverty and reduce deprivation; create the infrastructures and equal opportunities for people in communities to access and enjoy the environment and rich biodiversity that Rhondda Cynon Taf has to offer; by delivering low carbon and accessible public transport we will be improving air quality across the County Borough and in turn supporting the conditions that will enable improvements in the chronic physical health conditions, that are currently projected. By creating and supporting projects that will support and enable people irrespective of their background to enhance and contribute to their communities we will be supporting cultural well-being. The Assessment also contains examples of where plans are outlined to address the negative impacts of our commitments, including making sure that that

disabled people can access EV charging points and also have the opportunity to contribute to community food growing in accessible plots.

- 6.5 This Equality Impact Assessment will, over time, be supported by the additional and more detailed Impact Assessments of the projects/action plans that will deliver the Climate Change Strategy and also be further informed by the continuing 'Climate Conversation' with residents, particularly those who are communities of interest, partners and other stakeholders.

## **7 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed. Assessing the detail of the likely, or actual, effects of the strategy for residents and staff on the Welsh language, will be further addressed in the lower level plans that will deliver the actions required to meet the Council's carbon reduction ambitions. The detailed plans are currently being developed. However, in the meantime the work set out in the strategy will implement and integrate with the Council existing policies that currently actively support and promote the Welsh language in the services we deliver, procure or commission e.g. [Welsh Language Promotion Strategy](#), [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan](#) and the Council's agreed approach to RCT street and place names. Examples include opportunities to promote the Welsh Language across communities through signage in infrastructure and community projects, promotion of 'green' leisure and outdoor activities, our Comms and Engagement campaigns about our carbon reduction plans and in developing green skills in jobs and training. There is scope within the projects set out in the Strategy to support the work to increase the number of Welsh speakers across RCT and in doing so contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition set out in its strategy [Cymraeg 2050](#), to see a million Welsh speakers by 2050 and also to contribute to the national Well-being Goal of a 'Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language' as required by the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

## **8 CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT**

- 8.1 Since March 2021, the draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy has been the subject of wide ranging engagement with residents, community groups and staff as well as the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. However, the impact of intermittent Covid restrictions over the last year has limited the opportunity for face to face engagement.
- 8.2 It is proposed that we refresh and continue the programme of engagement and widen this activity to continue to involve as wide a range of stakeholders and align with relevant associated strategies. The Council will also continue to work with national and local environmental groups to engage residents and businesses and to also encourage them to engage in making different lifestyle choices.
- 8.3 To further raise awareness, the Council's social media and marketing tools will be used to develop and deliver targeted campaigns for specific audiences, as well as raise more general awareness of the impact of climate change. We are

keen to strengthen our engagement with the Rhondda Cynon Taf Youth Forum, schools and other youth groups, in addition to the various groups with which the Council has traditionally engaged.

## **9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.
- 9.2 Moving forward, the agreed programme of work to deliver the Council's Climate Change Strategy will be incorporated into Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements to ensure resource requirements are reviewed, challenged and planned for.

## **10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

## **11 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 11.1 The Council has committed to becoming a Carbon Neutral organisation by 2030 and to work with residents and businesses to ensure the whole County Borough is Carbon Neutral as close as possible to the 2030 target. This supports the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.
- 11.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, and its work contributes to all seven national goals. This can be seen in Appendix A within the Climate Change Strategy.

## **12 CONCLUSION**

- 12.1 The Council has set the ambitious target to become a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030, and for the County Borough to be as near to Carbon Neutral as possible by the same date. The draft 'Tackling Climate Change' Strategy sets out a framework of the action the Council will take over the next three years to make significant progress and lay the strong foundations to enable the Council to make progress towards achieving the 2030 targets as well as contributing to the Welsh Government carbon reduction ambition for a Carbon Neutral Public Service by 2030 and its target for a Net Zero Wales by 2050 or sooner.
- 12.2 Achieving the 2030 target requires all stakeholders and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf to work together. The Council, therefore welcomes the opportunity to continue its ongoing 'Climate Conversation' and engage with residents, staff, partners, other public and private organisations, community and environmental groups in seeking their views as to how we can all help to achieve these ambitious targets.