



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET SUB-COMMITTEE

6TH DECEMBER 2022

PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE RCT TREE, WOODLAND AND HEDGEROW STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE & CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the feedback and comments of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee following its pre-scrutiny of the Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy at its meeting on the 15th November 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the comments and observations of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report; and,
- 2.2 Subject to any further comment by Cabinet Members, endorse the recommendations outlined within the Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow Strategy Report, as attached to this report at Appendix 1.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Members to be aware of the comments and observations of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee prior to their consideration of the Council's Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow Strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The focus of this strategy is to actively protect Rhondda Cynon Taf's Trees and Woodland – the green infrastructure of parks, gardens, woods, trees in streets, footpaths, green spaces, trees and hedges that all benefit our environment so significantly. The strategy also sets the framework for the Council's commitment to the largest tree planting programme in a generation adopting the right tree, right place, right reason approach.

4.2 Cabinet considered the draft Strategy in June 2022 and agreed to extensive public consultation, the results of which are the subject of the report attached at appendix 2

5. PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE TREE, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROW STRATEGY REPORT.

5.1 The Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee met on the 15th November 2022 to consider the Council's Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow Strategy.

5.2 At the meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee, Members welcomed the Council's Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow Strategy and praised the Council's hard work in this area.

5.3 Members considered that the following points within the report required further examination:

- Consideration on the spacing and planting of fruit trees in clusters to enhance growth, fruit yields and appearance of the trees within the environment and location;
- Whether the report should consider referencing legislation regarding dangerous trees as opposed to the policy referred to in the document. Members felt that the statutory legislation would supersede any local policy and should therefore be included;
- References within the report noting British Standard BS5837 should be checked to confirm that they refer to the updated BS5837 (2012) standard and not previous versions with the name 'BS5837' identifier; and,
- Consideration should also be given to guidance set out by other advisory bodies and relevant associations, such as the NHBC or Royal Botanical Gardens publication and reference materials.

5.4 In conclusion, Members commended the report and commented that the Council's ongoing work in this area would lay a solid foundation for supporting further work on the Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow Strategy.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The report contained within Appendix A has been presented to Scrutiny for pre scrutiny prior for consideration by Cabinet.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 Any financial implications are outlined within Appendix A of the report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 None directly related to this strategy but there will be additional staff, capital and revenue impacts as plans under the strategy area developed.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES

10.1 The proposed Tree Strategy contributes to the Council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. Specifically, it contributes to 'People' by creating more natural communities that promote and maintain mental wellbeing and to 'Places' by getting the best out of our environment by looking after and investing in our greenspaces and specifically delivering natural carbon storage solutions across the County Borough to enhance air quality and reduce the impact of greenhouse gasses.

10.2 It also reflects the five ways of working in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Sustainable management is based on long-term considerations and is focused on preventative and precautionary action. The strategy aims to involve all the relevant stakeholders and to integrate tree activity into the wider operations of the Council. It will contribute specifically to the Resilience and Global Responsibility goals of the Act, but in the longer term it could have implications for all the goals.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 It is recognised that scrutiny is a vital component of good governance and improves Councils' decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness.

11.2 The undertaking of pre-scrutiny by the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in this area will strength accountability and assist Cabinet Members in taking any future decisions on these matters.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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COMMUNICATION**

Item: **PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE RCT TREE, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROW STRATEGY**

Background Papers

Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee – 15th November
2022.