



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES & PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Hybrid Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday, 15 November 2022 am 5.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance: -

Councillor C Middle (Chair)

Councillor G L Warren Councillor E L Dunning
Councillor S Emanuel Councillor G Holmes
Councillor W Hughes Councillor R Yeo

Officers in attendance: -

Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr A Critchlow, Head of Streetcare Services
Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer

23 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee and thanked Members for attending. The Chair also welcomed Cabinet Members County Borough Councillors A. Crimmings and M. Norris to the meeting.

24 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors J. Barton and P. Binning.

25 SCRUTINY RESEARCH

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the research facilities that were available to Members within the Council Business Unit. Members were advised that if they have any specific queries to email them to Scrutiny@rctcbc.gov.uk.

26 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's code of conduct, there were no declaration of interests pertaining to the agenda.

27 Minutes

The minutes of the 26th October 2022 were approved as an accurate record subject to the following amendments:

Item 7: Review of Mainstream School Transport

County Borough Councillor A Rogers requested for the minutes to include his concerns raised regarding pupils in Hirwaun not being able to have seating in the school bus.

County Borough Councillor V Dunn requested for her attendance to be marked as present for the meeting as the minutes indicate she was absent.

28 Consultations

The Members' Researcher and Scrutiny Officer referenced the consultation links, which were available through the 'RCT Scrutiny' website. Members were reminded that information is provided in respect of relevant consultations for consideration by the Committee, which are circulated on a monthly basis. Members were specifically referred to the consultation being run by Welsh Government regarding increasing public engagement in respect of climate change.

29 Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction provided Members with a brief update on current progress of the strategy.

Members were advised that the strategy was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9th December 2021 and published on the Councils Website in January 2022. Following the publication of the strategy, work continued with a development of a public facing Implementation Plan and Action Plan in consultation with all relevant service areas and the wider working group. The purpose of both the Implementation Plan and inherent Action Plan was to set objectives and milestones to signpost the way forward in delivering the 10 Ambitions set out within the Strategy.

Members were reminded that on the 29th September 2022, an overview of the Implementation Plan, Action Plan and related work streams was presented the Scrutiny Committee. It was resolved to endorse the Implementation Plan and associated Action Plan for submission to the next Climate Change Sub Committee; and, to review the practicalities of the Implementation Plan and related workstreams at a future Committee meeting. It was noted that the Implementation Plan and subsequent Action Plan have set out clear goals for the Council to aspire towards, including the short, medium and long-term targets in the development of charging infrastructure across the County Borough. The three main aims of the plan include:

- Identify key themes to support the Council's delivery of charging infrastructure across the County Borough, with a primary focus on off-street charging provision.
- Provide guidance and advice on best practice to develop a comprehensive network of electric vehicle charge points that both responds to existing demand for EV infrastructure and provides for and accelerates the uptake of electric vehicles in the future.
- Establish a clear set of actions to drive the delivery of the Council's EV Charging Ambitions.

The Implementation Plan and Action Plan are currently in the process of

undergoing translation and design, ready for publication onto the Council's website in the late Autumn of 2022. The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction advised Members that the public facing Action Plan and the milestones contained therein are linked to the Council's Climate Change Strategy and will be used to monitor improvements in the delivery of charging infrastructure. The Action Plan will be accompanied by an 'Internal Delivery Plan' (IDP), providing actions and milestones for all Service Areas of the Council in aim of supporting the actions identified within the Action Plan. Progress of all ongoing workstreams relating to EV charging are consistently monitored against the Action Plan and Internal Delivery Plan.

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction continued by updating Members on the Electric Vehicle Charging Action Plan. It was noted that the Action Plan states that the Council will *"Review the processes by which Council fleet vehicles are replaced to ensure that ultralow emission vehicles are considered as a preference wherever feasible and practicable."* Indeed, the replacement of such vehicles to ULEV is heavily reliant on the provision of suitable charging infrastructure across the County Borough to enable the continued operation of Council services.

Considering this, works have begun to install sufficient charging apparatus at a range of Council-owned car parks, including Council Depots, Offices, Leisure Centres, and other Council facilities. Whilst the infrastructure installation is primarily for fleet use in the first instance, conversations are ongoing regarding the use of charging facilities by staff and the public, in a way that is both practicable, fair, and does not hinder the operation of Council services. In addition, the Council are focusing efforts on publicly available charging at Council car park facilities.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager shared a presentation which aimed to provide Members with an update on the work currently being undertaken by the Council as part of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) with regard to installing electrical vehicle charging points across the region. Member were informed that the CCR embraces nearly 10 Local Authorities in Southeast Wales. The region as a whole has seen significant regeneration from Town Centres to Business Sites, Road and Railway and recently, electric vehicle technology.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that the first phase of the project relates to off Streetcar parks. They are approximately 140-145 sites across the region where charging points are being installed; In RCT they are currently 31 sites spread across the Borough. Within the 31 sites there are multiple charging points ranging from 7 to 22 Kilo Watts also known as fast chargers. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that of the 31 sites, 29 have had EV Charging Point Installed. However, of those 29 sites, some have yet to be connected as a result of the WDP due to their inability to keep up with the fast-paced environment. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager noted his disappointment as phase 1 should have been completed by the end of October; However, Members were advised that when phase 2 is launched, suggestions had already been put to the CCR and their appointed contractor to help mitigate such issues in the future. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that the level of charge will be priced at 35p per Kilo Watt hour at these sites.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager continued by advising

Members that Via the Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles, further funding has been provided towards phase 2 of the project which will see a further installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at a further 28 sites. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager briefly touched on phase 3 of the projects; he advised Members that funding has yet to be received regarding the project. Phase 3 will see an installation of EV Charging Points at a further 20 sites at various locations, potentially including libraries, and leisure centres.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager briefly touched on the use of Car Club vehicles through CCR; Car Club Vehicles will allow the public to rent vehicles for a couple hours etc. This will hopefully remove the need of vehicle ownership which as a result will reduce carbon emissions.

A Member inquired whether the grant funding from the Welsh Government will be available for the public to install charging points in their homes. He also requested timescales on when the EV Charging Points will be connected to the National Grid. The Member raised his concerns regarding the future roll out of the EV Charging Point due to the current delays.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that he currently has dates for the connection of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at 7 of the 31 sites. The Officer acknowledged the concerns of the Councillor with phase 2 and emphasised that it was important that CCR and their appointed contractor learnt lessons from the delays incurred during phase 1.

The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction advised Members that there are various property streams of grant funding available however, they are changed regularly. It was noted that when the strategy was being formulated, important links were installed within the report which can direct people to the appropriate websites which detail the grant funding.

A Member requested an update on the progress being made towards providing EV Charging Points for those who live in terraced housing and streets. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that there are no current plans for an on-street scheme in RCT. However, it was confirmed that one of the management training co-horsts, (Mercury) has a project to look into this matter.

A Member raised a query surrounding what strategy will be used to support wards which do not consist of facilities to support EV Charging Points. He also requested further information on how Car Clubs will work as he acknowledged there potential. The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager reassured Members that the EV Charging Points will be installed geographically within RCT to ensure that as many wards as possible are represented. He advised more information on CCRs Car Club will become available in due course.

A Member shared his concerns regarding the installation of EV Charging Points in car parks as it could limit the spaces available for normal car parking. He also voiced his concerns regarding the possible overload of EV Charging Points during such an early stage as they could become obsolete if a different alternative is established in the future.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Officer advised Members that the locations of the EV Charging Points have been allocated in areas with available land in order to not minimise disruption, he noted the importance of monitoring the roll out of the EV Charging Points. To add, the Head of Energy and Carbon

Reduction advised Members that the target set by Welsh Government in regard to EV Charging Points by 2030 is 28,000; it was noted that once phase 2 is complete there will be a total of 130 charging bays in RCT.

A Member inquired whether parking fines would be issued to those who park in bays dedicated for the use of the EV Charging Points without charging their cars. The Member also inquired if information or a map will be provided which shows where EV Charging Points are located in RCT. Lastly, he inquired on the number on EV Charging Points in the country.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that fines would be issued if a vehicle is parked in a bay for other than its intended purpose. He also advised Members that a Zap Map will be provided to show where the live EV Charging Points are located in RCT. Information will also be on the Council's Website on the location of the live EV Charging Points.

A Member inquired on what methods would be used to encourage people to use electric vehicles within RCT; he also inquired on the average time it takes to charge an electric vehicle.

The Parking Services and Enforcement Manager advised Members that it takes approximately 8 hours or less to fully charge an electric vehicle depending on the speed of the charger. He advised Members that one way of encouraging the use of electric vehicle is by making it convenient to access charging points by offering different locations for the EV Charging points, bringing costs down and emphasising the importance of tackling climate change.

A Member inquired on whether planning applications has been considered in RCT as in Cardiff in relation to the installation of EV Charging Points in people homes. He noted that some areas may not have the infrastructure to support that power surge and as a result they may need to change the rewiring of their whole home.

The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that the LDP is currently being revised by the Council and issues relating to EV charging policies and commercial development will be looked at.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the content of the report
- Agree to receive further updates, in future, concerning the delivery of the EV Charging Strategy Ambitions and their subsequent ongoing workstreams.

30 Tree and Hedgerow Strategy

The Members' Researcher & Scrutiny Officer presented the Cabinet report relating to the RCT Tree, Woodlands and Hedgerow strategy and advised Members that the purpose of this item was for Members comments and feedback to be fed back to Cabinet in their meeting on the 12th December.

Following this, the Director of Prosperity & Development presented his report to Members and provided a detailed overview of the strategy.

Discussion ensued and a Member noted that further consideration should be given 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.

Another Member queried 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; The Member also noted references within the report noting British Standard BS5837 and argued that this should be checked to confirm that they refer to the updated BS5837 (2012) standard and not previous versions with the name 'BS5837' identifier. The Member further commented that 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.

The Director of Prosperity & Development advised Members that the Brewery sector in RCT is growing and there has been discussion regarding where they get their apples from. Members were advised that the soil structure in RCT may not be conducive to orchards. However, the Director emphasised that discussions have only just commences and that Members will be kept updated on the progress being made. In respect of legislation, the Director agreed to include this in addition to the policy and also to include the updated version of the British Standards. The Director also agreed with the idea of referencing links to other documents and also informed Members about the 'Let's Talk Trees' pages currently on the Council website.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED** for the comments and feedback of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee to be fed back to Cabinet at its meeting on the 12th December 2022.

31 Porth Town Centre Strategy

The Director of Prosperity & Development presented his report to Committee Members and updated Members on the progress made to date on the Porth Town Centre Strategy.

Members were reminded that the strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2019 following an extensive consultation exercise. The strategy sets out an integrated, co-ordinated and holistic approach to town centre regeneration that takes into account the distinctive role Porth has at the heart of the community and its important location for services, employment, housing and transport functions. The approved Strategy document is included at Appendix 1.

Members were directed to section 4 of the report which detailed the updates on Porth strategy current position. The Porth Town Centre Strategy consists of a range of co-ordinated and integrated physical development projects. There has been good progress made to date across the Strategy, with a number of projects underway, and other projects within their developmental stages. The Director of Prosperity and Development summarised the following projects that have progressed since the approval of the Strategy including:

1. Porth Transport Hub
2. Porth Plaza/Community Hub
3. Provision of additional long and short-term parking
4. Extension of the park and Ride provision
5. Redevelopment of underused and derelict buildings

6. Relocation of Council Staff into Porth Town Centre
7. Public Realm Improvements
8. Town Centre Maintenance Grant and;
9. Development of extra care housing for elderly and vulnerable

Discussion ensued and the Chair noted that there is a huge need across RCT for single bed accommodation. The Chair queried if there were any plans with Social Landlords to look at developing these old derelict buildings for regeneration. The Director of Prosperity and Development confirmed that those conversations are taking place through the local Council Market Assessment which identifies needs across RCT. He emphasised that there's always a balance to be struck and that sometimes-putting flats in town centres, particularly over older buildings, can cause controversy. There is a balance to be struck between regeneration needs, housing needs and parking needs.

The Chair queried what progress has been made to the old Bingo Hall in Porth. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised that despite efforts in negotiating with the owner of the Bingo Hall they were unsuccessful in their attempts to move anything forward.

A Member expressed his positive views toward the regeneration of Porth Town Centre and most importantly the integration for the Public Transport Hub. He inquired whether the strategy would consider the regeneration of areas outside of town centres which consist of considerable retail shops. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that the Council as working with the Welsh Government Regeneration team in order to discuss the regeneration of highstreets. It was noted to include an update report on a future work programme regarding the regeneration of other town centres in RCT.

A Member inquired if work is being undertaken to the Porth Hotel as is for the Bingo Hall. The Director of Prosperity and Development advised Members that they are currently in talks with the owner to identify a solution for regeneration. It was confirmed that if the owner is not prepared to cooperate, sanctions will be issued.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- An update report to be provided to committee once the development is complete with the positive or negative impact made.
- A further report to be received 6 months later, to highlight the difference made to the Town Centre.

32 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to declare.

33 Chairs Review and Close

The Chair noted the constructive discussion this evening and thanked Members for their contributions. The Chair asked Members to come in physically to the Chamber for future meetings where it is possible. The Chair also noted the date of the next meeting as being the 16th January 2023 and therefore wished all Members a lovely Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 6.16 pm

COUNCILLOR C MIDDLE

CHAIR