



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET SUB COMMITTEE**

**23rd March 2023**

#### **RCT Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023-25)**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION CHRISTIAN HANAGAN IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE & CORPORATE SERVICES COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA LEYSHON**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 By 2030, the Council's targets are to become a carbon neutral organisation, to work with residents and businesses within the County Borough to ensure the whole County Borough is as close as possible to carbon neutral and to contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition of a Net Zero public sector.
- 1.2 The Climate Change Engagement Plan plan outlines how we propose to communicate and involve stakeholders in developing our approach to working together to achieve these targets.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Sub Committee

- 2.1 Considers the information contained in the report and the proposed engagement approach.
- 2.2 Subject to any amendments approves the approach outlined:
- 2.3 Agree that to develop the approach going forward and deliver on the communications and engagement activity, there is a need for existing staff support, initially provided by the named responsible officers, working in partnership with key environmental stakeholders .

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

- 3.1 To assist the Council in its aim to meet its Carbon Neutral targets by 2030.
- 3.2 To support the implementation and delivery of the Council's wider Tackling Climate Change Strategy – 'Think Climate RCT'

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 In March 2021, the Cabinet, and the as then Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, received a report that provided the opportunity for Members to consider the Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy and agreed to engage and consult with residents and businesses on the Council's response to Climate Change.
- 4.2 The Draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy was subject to a wide-ranging consultation, as part of a new Climate Conversation. Across the Council. The Climate Change conversation was branded as "["Let's Talk Climate Change RCT"](#)" and used a [new online engagement platform as a pilot](#), to host key climate change projects. The methods of engagement on the site include an online survey, polls, the ability to map localised comments, a stories box and a section where users are invited to provide their ideas on a certain topic (stories).
- 4.3 In addition to the 'Let's Talk' online conversations the Council worked with services and partners to develop appropriate engagement for individual climate change projects based on some of the work underpinning the climate change strategy. We have also had conversations and conducted surveys with our own staff.
- 4.4 In [June 2021 Cabinet received feedback](#) from the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, respectively, to consider a report on the Draft Climate Change Strategy (2021-2025) Consultation Responses. Members agreed that Officers use the feedback to inform the development of the final Climate Change Strategy and agreed to support the approach of facilitating an ongoing climate change conversation with residents, local businesses and partners, linked to the final Climate Change Strategy workplan
- 4.5 The feedback from the various conversations helped to inform and develop the Council's final draft Climate Change Strategy – 'Think Climate RCT 2022-25', which was approved at a [Cabinet meeting in June 2022](#).
- 4.6 In agreeing the Tackling Climate Change Strategy in June 2022, the Cabinet also agreed 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.
- 4.7 The Council also committed to continue to work with national and local environmental groups to engage with residents, communities and businesses, and to maximise community expertise in order to also support and encourage different lifestyle choices.

## 5. **CURRENT POSITION**

5.1 The Climate Change Strategy outlines our approach will include ;

*“...encouraging and facilitating changes in lifestyle and choices in all staff and their representatives, elected Members, residents, local business as well as our visitors to Rhondda Cynon Taf. The involvement of younger people will be key to creating, developing and delivering this plan over the long term and we will be continuing to progress this involvement through school eco councils, our Youth Fora and through other community organisations. Plans to progress our work, particularly in engaging with people face to face have been affected by restrictions arising from the pandemic but we are keen to accelerate our plans safely now that restrictions are lifted. As well as listening to what people, communities and businesses are telling us, we also need to support and challenge the Welsh Government to do better and to break down any national barriers that mitigate against local action.”*

5.2 Specifically in the Think Climate PEOPLE section of the Strategy it states;

*“.... residents and staff told us they would like to see us increase awareness of climate change and provide opportunities for residents and communities to become involved in developing solutions that will contribute to the County Borough becoming Carbon Neutral”*

We have responded to this feedback and plan to;

1. Provide clear, simple and practical ways to encourage everyone to play their part to reduce carbon at home, in work and getting about.
2. Listen to and understand what our residents of all ages are telling us.
3. Invite and encourage residents, businesses, staff and their representatives to discuss what the Council can do to help them to reduce their carbon footprint and what they can do for themselves.
4. Work with young people, including through schools and their eco councils, youth groups and Arts projects in ways they can help shape our plans for their future.
5. Work with Community Groups, including the Older Persons Advisory Group and those that are seldom heard so that they can contribute to and shape our plans for the future. 19
6. Develop intergenerational projects that enhance the skills and lives of people in our communities.
7. Provide opportunities for communities to become involved in developing local solutions through Neighbourhood Networks.

5.3 In addition to our own plans, the Welsh Government has developed a draft [Strategy for Public Engagement & Action \(2022-26\)](#), the consultation in which closed in December 2022, and a [Climate Change Engagement Approach \(2022–26\)](#). Within both the framework and the strategy, Welsh Government highlights the need for government, public bodies, businesses and communities across

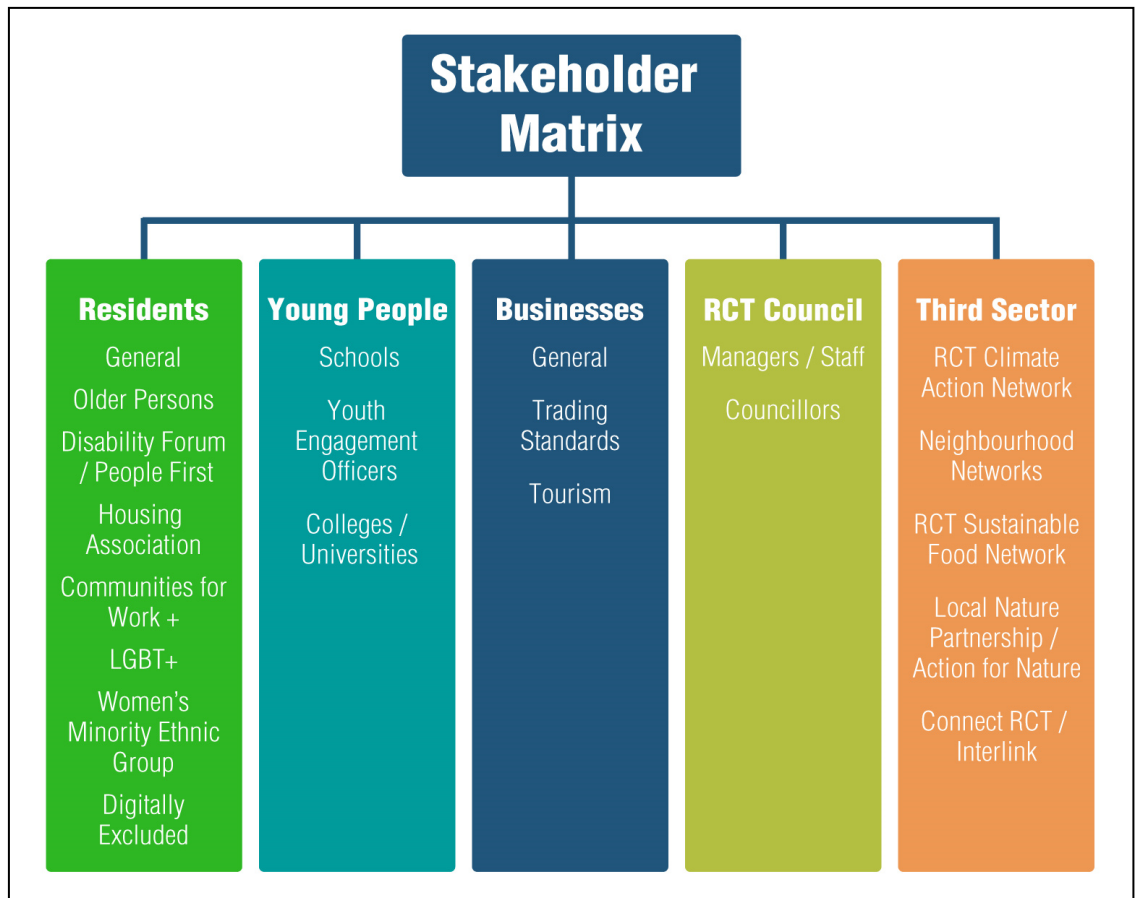
Wales to work together to tackle the shared challenges of the Climate and Nature emergencies in a Team Wales approach.

- 5.4 Taking account of all of the above and so that we can fully contribute to the 'Team Wales' approach, The Council has set out its approach to Climate Change engagement in the accompanying **Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023-25)**. The plan outlines the detail on how we propose to engage with, involve and communicate with stakeholders in developing and implementing our approach to achieving the targets set out in the new Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25) and is outlined in section 6 below, with the full plan attached to this report as an Appendix. The plan is currently a working document and will be updated regularly as new information becomes available.

## **6 RCT Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023-25).**

- 6.1 The aim of the plan is to set out how we will engage with residents, schools, businesses, staff and the third sector on considering greener and more sustainable lifestyle choices whilst raising the profile and increasing awareness about Climate Change. This will be supported by identifying best practice and sharing information about the good work that is already taking place across the Council, in our schools as well as by individuals and groups in the wider community.
- 6.2 The Climate Change Engagement Plan sets the framework that will enable the Council to implement new and innovative ways of engagement with our residents through events, campaigns and competitions, whilst encouraging residents to consider their current lifestyle choices and behaviours in their homes, at work, how they travel etc.. All these steps can contribute to more sustainable living and fewer carbon emissions.
- 6.3 Raising climate awareness with all our stakeholders and encouraging, inviting and supporting action is key if the Council is to achieve its climate goals and play our part in Tackling Climate Change. The Engagement Plan embeds the key engagement/involvement actions from our Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25) – [‘Think Climate RCT’](#). This approach will ensure that the Council delivers a strategically aligned approach towards engagement and communication across the Council’s services and the County Borough.
- 6.4 To ensure that the Council takes a holistic approach to County Borough-wide engagement, the plan includes an Engagement Matrix which aligns with the Council’s current [Involvement and Engagement Framework](#). The Matrix identifies the key stakeholder groups within the County Borough and associated subgroups. It is vital that those people who are traditionally seldom heard have a voice in tackling climate change as well as our key stakeholders and third sector community leaders who are well placed to support societal behaviour change.

6.5 The full Plan is attached in Appendix 1. Set out below is Matrix of Stakeholders and a summary of the engagement plan. The Stakeholder Matrix and accompanying engagement plan will be developed and widened to include other groups as our community engagement widens.



Residents including our 'seldom heard' groups

6.6 As set out in the Council's Involvement Strategy [Involvement and Engagement Framework](#), the Council is committed to involving and engaging with residents, communities and other stakeholders as part of our everyday business. The Council has a good track record of engaging with residents and the information collected is valuable, as it helps to understand what residents think, where the Council needs to act and how to improve Council services. The subgroups set out in the Matrix include the majority of our residents, including those who are seldom heard via a range of selected networks and groups. Whilst this categorisation may not account for all stakeholders in the County Borough, we will strive to continue to develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.

### Young People

- 6.7 The Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25) is clear in that the involvement of younger people will be key to creating, developing and delivering our plans over the long term and we will be continuing to progress this involvement through schools, school eco councils and our Youth Fora. A suite of age-appropriate climate related activities will include discussions about how we can implement and support sustainable behaviours and how we can help inform and prepare young people to about decisions about their futures in the emerging green sectors.

### Businesses

- 6.8 If we are to reach the Welsh Government Net Zero ambition by 2030, we must fully engage the many different types of businesses across RCT. We can achieve this by supporting local businesses, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, by helping them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be better prepared to tender for suitable opportunities for Council contracts as they arise. We must also offer support via distributing information on sourcing more sustainable products locally and selling to local markets. Engagement with businesses will take place via Town Centre Forums and BIDs along with business surveys. We will work with our tourism partners and businesses to engage with visitors and tourists.

### Inside the Council

- 6.9 All our Councillors and staff have a role to play in reducing the Council's Carbon Footprint in the decisions they make, the services they deliver and by their everyday actions. Many staff will be directly involved in energy saving projects, others will have less obvious contributions, but these are as important. As Councillors also represent communities and over 80% of our staff live in RCT we can all play a key role in supporting and encouraging climate initiatives across the County Borough. To achieve this, we have committed to putting in place training and awareness raising, providing opportunities for ongoing climate conversations with staff, listening to their views and ideas and reinforcing climate messages through clear and relevant messaging of the council's commitments. The most recent staff Net Zero network took place on 6 March and considered how the Council services can best prepare to to meet the requirements of the new non domestic [Waste Regulations which will come into effect on 1 October 2023](#).

### Third Sector Organisations

- 6.10 We know there is excellent sustainable and 'green' work going on in our communities undertaken by volunteers and well-established community groups, networks and representative bodies. It is important that we recognise how we can best support these community groups and our third sector and community partners and learn from them to generate the most value from these projects/activities through our services. Our Climate Commitments contained within our Think Climate Strategy include a commitment ' to working with Third Sector organisations, Neighbourhood Networks, the [RCT Climate Action](#)

[Network](#), and other partners to maximise our collective resources to achieve a Carbon Neutral County Borough'. Our ongoing climate conversation will seek to maximise the information sharing and engagement opportunities already in place and learn from community experts.

- 6.11 Delivering this commitment relies on the Council engaging with community groups via our third sector partners, keeping our messaging and purpose open, transparent, and consistent in order to work cohesively and constructively across the County Borough.

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 7.1 The engagement approaches outlined in the strategy will provide further opportunities for more diverse groups of residents and stakeholders to get involved in the Climate Conversation and provide a range of methods including online and specific engagement opportunities for targeted groups, such as young people and older people and those previously seldom heard or digitally excluded.

## **8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The engagement approaches outlined in the strategy will be fully bilingual and will be inclusive of Welsh speakers as part of the general public consultation.

## **9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 9.1 The engagement and involvement approaches put in place to deliver the Tackling Climate Change Strategy to date have enabled the Council to set a strategic position without full access to residents as a result of previous Covid restrictions. However, our aim is to strengthen our approach through the Climate Change Engagement Plan. The plan is a live document that will be updated from information arising from feedback from all stakeholders as well as emerging best practice and new Welsh Government engagement frameworks.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications directly aligned to this report. There are staff time implications for those officers nominated as leads in the plan.
- 10.2 Moving forward, any agreed programme of work to deliver the Council's Climate Change Engagement Plan will be incorporated into Medium Term Financial Planning arrangements to ensure resource requirements are reviewed, challenged and planned for.

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 11.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report, at this stage.

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

- 12.1 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 2030 also This contributes to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24 and three Priorities set out in the Plan and to meet the carbon reduction targets. The Engagement Plan seeks to inform and shape decisions to tackle climate change and applies the Sustainable Development (SD) principle i.e. '*acts in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*' The Engagement Plan applies the five ways of working to achieve the SD principle, particularly Involvement, Collaboration and Integration.

**13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 This report and associated **Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023-25)** outlines how we propose to communicate with and involve stakeholders in developing our approach to achieving the targets set out in the new Tackling Climate Change Strategy – 'Think Climate RCT' (2022-25)
- 13.2 The plan sets out how we are going to engage with residents, schools, businesses, staff and the third sector on considering greener and more sustainable lifestyle choices whilst raising the profile and increasing awareness about climate change. Among other things, this can be achieved by identifying best practice and providing easy access to information about the good work that is already taking place across the Council, in our schools and wider community.
- 13.3 The plan embeds the key engagement/involvement actions from our Tackling Climate Change Strategy (2022-25), aligns with the Welsh Government's 'Team Wales' approach and is flexible enough to respond or include any national arrangements likely to emerge from consultation on '[the WG strategy for engaging the general public in action on Climate Change](#)' This will ensure that the Council delivers a strategically aligned approach towards Climate Change engagement, involvement and communication across both the Council and the County Borough.

**APPENDIX 1 - RCT Climate Change Engagement Plan (2023-25)**