



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

18 October 2023

'THINK CLIMATE RCT' THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2025

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee with a first quarter position statement as part of an overview of our progress in delivering the Council's Climate Change Strategy, '[Think Climate RCT](#)' agreed in June 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Consider the information contained within the report;
- 2.2 Take a view on any potential areas for further consideration as part of the Climate Change, Prosperity and Frontline Services Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme;
- 2.3 Note the recommendation arising from the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee, see para 5.1, in respect of procured goods and services, and the impact on the Council's Carbon Footprint;
- 2.4 Note the potential to further embed the Council's response to Climate Change to the business of the Council as part of the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan; and,
- 2.5 Consider whether Members wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report in line with the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To assist the Council to meet its 2030 Carbon Neutral targets.

for RCT to be a carbon neutral Council,
for 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.

- 3.2 To support the implementation and delivery of the Council's wider Tackling Climate Change Strategy ['Think Climate RCT'](#) and associated strategies/plans.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In recent years there have been growing global, UK wide and national drives to reduce carbon emissions, keep global warming below 1.5°, protect nature and the environment and adapt to the current and projected changes in the climate and more frequent extreme weather events.
- 4.2 In 2019, Welsh Government declared a Climate Emergency and set out its approach in its strategy [Prosperity for All: A low Carbon Wales](#). Since then, the Welsh Government has put in place many and varied plans, strategies, targets, milestones, ambitions and deadlines for public bodies to meet. The latest UK Climate Change Committee's ['Progress Report on Reducing emissions in Wales'](#), published in June, indicated that *'while the First Carbon Budget (2016-2020) has been achieved, Wales is not yet on track to meet its targets for the second half of this decade and beyond'*. The report set out 58 recommendations across a number of areas, which are currently under consideration by the Minister.
- 4.3 More locally, whilst the Council had progressed energy saving and other carbon reduction projects, it also recognised the speed, complexity, interconnections and differing geographic and sectoral boundaries surrounding the response to tackling climate change across all the services we provide, purchase or commission.
- 4.4 In June 2022, following engagement with residents, staff and other stakeholders given the Covid restrictions in place at the time, Cabinet agreed the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy: ['Think Climate RCT'](#). 'Think Climate RCT' currently provides a structure and framework for our plans to decarbonise the Council and the County Borough. Also, by mirroring the Council's current Corporate Plan in its commitments in respect of Think Climate People: Think Climate Places and Think Climate Prosperity the Council started to embed carbon reduction into the business of the Council.
- 4.5 Since June 2022, there have been numerous reports of progress of projects presented to Cabinet, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and to Scrutiny Committees. A high level summary of progress has been included as a standing item in the quarterly Performance Reports considered by Cabinet, Quarter 4 update can be seen at [Section 7](#) for illustrative purposes.
- 4.6 By mirroring the priorities in the Council's current Corporate Plan; i.e. Think Climate People: Think Climate Places and Think Climate Prosperity, the Council has started to embed the Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction into the business of the Council.
- 4.7 This report provides an overview of progress against 'Think Climate RCT' during Quarter 1 2023/24, with the opportunity to view the detailed plans across each of the Climate priorities. The ongoing work programme to deliver the Climate Change Strategy in 2023/24, will continue to be embedded within the action planning and reporting for the Council's priorities. Further specific reports, as deemed appropriate, will also continue to be reported to Cabinet, the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee and Scrutiny Committees, in accordance with the agreed work programmes.

5 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 This update was previously considered by the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee at its meeting on 27 September. Members indicated that the information/format was helpful and provided an overview of the wide range of activity and detail if needed in the associated linked reports and documents. However, there is an action [arising from the Sub Committee](#) to provide further information in respect of procured goods and services, at 67% currently the highest proportion of the Council's Carbon Footprint.
- 5.2 The update considers four areas of focus within the Climate Change Strategy, acknowledging that there are also projects which overlap or do not have a clear 'home'. Where this is the case, the items are included in the areas of 'best fit'.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

Summary of progress to 30 June 2023

Council Specific

Our Carbon Footprint

We are on target to complete the 2022/23 Carbon Footprint calculation for submission to Welsh Government in September. The 2021/22 footprint as reported to [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in December 2022](#) was 120,907.4 tonnes CO₂, with the largest part of our footprint, 67%, in our procured goods and services, and we continue to work with our suppliers to reduce their footprints. Actions to reduce our carbon footprint are set out in the Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan 2023-25 agreed by [Cabinet in March 2023](#).

Staff Awareness

We continue to raise staff awareness. Formal methods include embedding the need to reduce carbon into new job descriptions and induction training, management briefings and across the performance management processes, supported by the 'Think Climate' webpage. Staff are a key stakeholder group in the [Climate Change Engagement Plan](#) agreed by Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in March 2023. E learning is nearing completion and will be available to staff and elected Members during Quarter 2.

Energy Efficiency and renewable energy

We have put in place a new process for identifying projects for the Carbon Reduction Programme through a review of energy audits and Display Energy Certificate data. Energy audits are ongoing, with the current focus on the top 50 consuming sites. This work is identifying potential wastage and putting in place more efficient energy efficient practices and targeted training for staff on site. The agreed 2023/24 Carbon Reduction Programme is being implemented and on target. The programme includes continuing to invest in solar energy installations on Council buildings and we are also progressing roof top solar PV screening for Council and leased buildings to inform work programmes.

Fleet

A plan to transition our fleet to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles was agreed by [Cabinet in September 2022](#) and we achieved our 2022/23 target of 14 cars, 78 light vans and 29 medium vans. Our progress is now dependent on finance, access to charging points and the results of a Fleet Maximisation project which will ensure that services have access to vehicles that best meet their needs. We are actively seeking funding to support the implementation of the Fleet Transition Plan. Welsh Government has confirmed that currently no grants are available for 2023/24. In the meantime, we are continuing to research alternative fuels and vehicle trials

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to ensure we keep abreast of technological developments. This quarter we attended Hydrogen vehicle and commercial EV demonstrations and trials.

Council Buildings, including schools.

The Office Accommodation Strategy 'Fit for the Future' and the Council's Operating Model and Working Arrangements Policy was approved by [Cabinet in May 2023](#) and is now being implemented. Among other things, this strategy locates Council buildings/services in buildings closer to the people that use, work and visit them and/or are accessible by public transport. As part of the strategy, we are progressing the move of the Council Headquarters from the Pavilions, Clydach Vale to Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd. The consultation to inform the alternative use of [Clydach Vale](#) site as a location for a new 3 to 19 special school in RCT was agreed by [Cabinet in June 2023](#). Further detail on Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme can be found [here](#).

Across the County Borough

Think Climate People

1. We put in place campaigns to support and encourage lifestyle choices and highlighted the Council's work across a range of services and projects including: [the roll out of the new recycling arrangements](#) in advance of, and as part of, changes introduced in July 2023; raising awareness of local ['Lost Peatlands'](#) project and the RCT Local Nature Partnership [Living Landscapes Events](#) and a range of national climate and environmental campaigns.
2. Prepared for the opening of Canolfan Calon Taf at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, which aims to engage people in their local environment, contribute to activities with positive climate impact and increase expertise and a love of nature.
3. Continued to develop our bid for 'Sustainable Food Places' Bronze Award to be submitted in September 2023.
4. Helped to promote sustainable, local food in services and communities through initiatives including, Community Pantries and fridges and strengthening the Community Food Growing networks, Food Pantry and 'Big Bocs Bwyd' networks. However, this continues to prove challenging as a result of the Cost of Living crisis.
5. Implemented further developments in our ['Think Climate'](#) Web presence and following agreement of an Engagement Plan by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee in March 2023](#), we met with the Older Peoples' Forum and put in place arrangements for face to face engagement with residents during July, August and September.
6. Continued to deliver workshops to support residents with Energy Efficiency measures.
7. Continued to work with third sector and community partners to maximise our resources and seek and showcase areas of expertise and numerous environmental volunteering opportunities across the County Borough.

Think Climate Places

1. Continued to develop and support the land based Solar Farm in Coed Ely, Hydro schemes including the Dare Valley and Treforest Weir projects with Geothermal projects also in the pipeline, subject to funding.
2. Saw the contractor starting work on the construction of the Amgen 1.5 MW single wind turbine.
3. Completed early stages of preparation to procure a 200KW Solar PV Development to decarbonise energy consumption at the waste water treatment plant in Bryn Pica.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

4. Secured grant funding of £396k from Welsh Government/Transport for Wales for 2023/24 to continue to implement EV Charging Strategy.
5. Increased the tonnage of household goods reused in [Council reuse outlets](#) from 68.05 tonnes in Q4 2022/23 to 80.59 tonnes for Q1 2023/24.
6. Continued to investigate how we can legally recycle or reuse seized and forfeited goods.
7. Progressed the development of Active Travel routes for Treorchy/Treherbert and Cwmbach as part of Cynon Trail and Maerdy/Ferndale.
8. Progressed combined mapping layer, which includes tree canopy coverage and natural tree regeneration. The information emerging will inform the priority areas for new tree planting.

Think Climate Prosperity

The Council has taken a number of steps to support people in poverty, many of which also reduce carbon emissions and making existing homes more energy efficient. We are currently researching data and evidence to inform the new Affordable Warmth Strategy. In the meantime, we continued to deliver strategic schemes including the joint promotion of [Nest](#) home energy services with Welsh Government and progressed the creation and implementation of 'ECO Flex' scheme and [Great British Insulation Scheme](#) which will enable additional external funding to be levered into the area. Scoping joint project with Cwm Taf LHB in respect of 'Heat and Save' interventions for residents affected by living in cold related homes with a view to improving the referral process to engage with these residents. This quarter

- 47 new Heating Grant applications were received.
- 23 Heating Grants were completed with £75k grant being awarded.
- 1 Minor Heat and Save Assistance grant has been completed.
- 12 referrals were made to the Housing Energy Officer, for advice on energy saving measures or assistance that could help them with their bills.
- 38 Solar Panel Grant applications were received.
- 28 Solar Panel Grants were completed (£31k grants awarded).

We also

1. Progressed the new RCT eco School Awards to be launched in the Autumn term. The Award comprises three sections: biodiversity, waste management and carbon management. As part of the evidence for the award, we started to develop school-based dashboards. Once in place, the Dashboards will help schools to monitor carbon and energy saving.
2. Continued to work with suppliers to help them to identify and reduce their footprints.
3. Worked with 'Visit Wales' (VW) to start to develop an RCT Sustainable Accommodation Toolkit using VW's accreditation scheme to identify visitor accommodation in RCT which incorporates aspects of sustainable and green tourism.
4. Implemented a new package of grant support for local businesses. The criteria have changed to allow businesses to use grants to meet their carbon reduction and energy efficiency needs, i.e.:
 - a) The Enterprise Investment Fund has been broadened to include support for carbon reduction.
 - b) The Large Scale Property Improvements grant has been refocussed to encourage energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions.

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- c) A Commercial Improvement Grant has been introduced which will support larger scale improvements to commercial buildings with energy efficiency intrinsic to design e.g. replacement windows and doors, shop fronts.

The associated action plan can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic duty implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

7 CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT/INVOLVEMENT

There are no specific consultation implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

There are no stand-alone financial implications resulting from the recommendations set out in the report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

10 LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

10.1 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 and aligns directly to the priorities of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Making a Difference' – 2020-24.

10.2 This report reflects the Sustainable Development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by improving all aspects of Well-being through 'Think Climate RCT'; taking steps to make sure that decisions we take today do not affect future generations from making the decisions they need in the future and contributing to the seven national Well-being Goals as set out in Appendix A of 'Think Climate RCT'.

11 Conclusion

11.1 The Council has a 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. Tackling Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT' sets out a framework of the action the Council will take

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 ambitions for Net Zero public sector by 2030 and its target for a Net Zero Wales by 2050 or sooner.

- 11.2 This report provides an update of the first three months of 2023/24. Whilst the Council can demonstrate positive steps towards meeting Carbon reductions targets, across the Council to date, continuing progress will depend on a number of factors outside our direct control, including access to funding, technology, skills; lifestyle choices of our residents and wider policy direction and integration emerging from Welsh Government. Further embedding of carbon reduction into the business of the Council through the new Corporate Plan will continue to strengthen the Council's own arrangements.
- 11.3 Achieving our targets requires all stakeholders and communities of Rhondda Cynon Taf to work together. The Council will continue to work with all stakeholders across the County Borough, the region and across Wales

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972
as amended by
THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT, 1985
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
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