



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

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 22 November 2023 at 5.00 pm.

The following Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Councillors were present online:-

Councillor C Middle (Chair)

Councillor G L Warren Councillor J Barton
Councillor E L Dunning Councillor G Holmes
Councillor W Hughes Councillor G Jones
Councillor A O Rogers Councillor W Treeby
Councillor R Yeo

Officers in attendance:-

Mr P Dukes, Principal Carbon Reduction Officer
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr S Humphreys, Head of Legal Services
Mr P Mortimer, Funding And Implementation Manager
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction
Mr A Stone, Head of Flood Risk Management and Strategic Projects
Mr S Williams, Director for Highways, Streetcare and Transportation Services
Mrs S Handy, Members Researcher & Scrutiny Officer

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor C Leyshon, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Corporate Estate

Apologies for absence

Councillor P Binning Councillor V Dunn
Councillor P Evans Councillor G O Jones

22 Welcome

The Chair welcomed Members, Officers and Cabinet Members to the meeting.

23 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.

24 Apologies

Apologies of absence were received from County Borough Councillors V. Dunn, P. Binning, P. Evans and Geraint Jones.

25 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the code of conduct, there were no declaration of interest pertaining to the agenda.

26 Minutes

The minutes of the 18th October 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

27 Consultations

The Members' Researcher & 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 and updated on a fortnightly basis.

28 Report on the Statutory Public Consultation for the Authority's Review of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan

The Head of Flood Risk Management presented his report to provide Members with the opportunity to consider the responses to the statutory public consultation on the revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan (formerly known as a Flood Risk Management Plan), as required under Section 10 of the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010.

Following this, Members had the opportunity to scrutinise the report and to ask questions.

A Member noted that there were a large number of 'views' on the Council website but only a small number of residents who completed the consultation. The Member queried the reason for this and if more could have been done to encourage participation. The Head of Flood Risk Management noted that this is a statutory consultation where certain groups must be included. He also noted that it was posted twice a week on social media pages as well. He also emphasised that the fact that people were looking at the page can be taken as a good thing and a passive approval. The Head of Flood Risk Management noted that the responses received were actually very good and that the number participating could be improved on in the future through further engagement with the Communication Team.

The Chair followed on from this and queried whether the Council engaged with certain disability groups/community Volunteer groups/Charities etc. The Head of Flood Risk Management referred to Appendix B and noted the statutory consultees that had to be done, then staff, Councillors, Transport For Wales etc were targeted. It was accepted that demographics groups were not targeted but it was aimed at the general public. The Chair questioned if the MOD were consulted. The Head of Flood Risk Management noted that these were not

consultees, however, he pointed out that this wasn't the emergency response plan, which is a measure within the strategy.

Another Member queried if the general public were a statutory consultee and it was confirmed that they are considered as a statutory consultee in the process. The Member subsequently queried if the team also took advantage of social media as a form of communication. The Head of Flood Risk Management referred to Appendix A and the poster used. It was noted that this went out on social media twice a week for the six weeks that the consultation ran.

Another Member queried how this plan will help those who had been affected by flooding and those who may be affected by flooding in the future. The Head of Flood Risk Management noted that the whole basis of the strategy is to understand the risk and effectively to put a plan in place. In the main strategy there are 5 principles set out by the Welsh Government and beneath that there are objectives and measures which are already built into the strategy. The Member queried whether residents have information packs that will better prepare them. The Officer noted that the pages on the Flood Risk Management website have just gone live and that these will come into the emergency planning forum. It was emphasised that part of the strategy does involve making people more aware. The Member queried what resources were in place for those who don't use the internet. The Officer advised that part of the strategy is to develop a communication strategy which will involve reaching out to different groups. These are action plans within the strategy. The Chair queried if engagement was face to face, however, the Officer confirmed that engagement was only online but that residents could request a paper copy.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

- i. To consider and scrutinise the content of this report together with the public consultation report contained in Appendix 1.
- ii. To recommend a targeted consultation during implementation of the final LFRMS and Action Plan for community specific measures and actions, as referenced in Objective 9, Measure 3 and Actions A6, A7 and A8.

29 RCT's Town Centre Strategies

The Director of Prosperity & Development introduced the report and handed over to the Head of Regeneration. Members were asked to consider progress on developing and delivering town centre regeneration strategies and placemaking plans in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Following this, discussion ensued. The Chair queried what overlap there is with Town & Community Councils bearing in mind that the Rhondda does not have a Town Council. The Head of Regeneration confirmed that of the towns with strategies it is only Pontypridd has a Town Council and that there is a strong partnership relationship with Pontypridd Town Council which has served to strengthen the delivery.

Another Member highlighted the problem with homelessness and noted that this can affect footfall in town centres. The Member queried what steps the Council were taking to tackle this and if they were working in partnership with the Housing team. The Member also queried whether Social Housing was being

integrated into any of the town plans. The Head of Regeneration confirmed that they have been looking at housing needs as part of the strategic approach and confirmed that the team are working very closely with colleagues in Housing and housing associations. The Chair referred to Tonypany and that there is already two major developments going on in that area and queried whether the Council will prioritise current buildings before allowing other social developments in the town centres. The Head of Regeneration advised that it is a balance for each town centre to have the right mix and the strategy will reflect the need in each area. Another Member agreed and noted that properties can be fragmented between commercial lets and social housing. The Member also noted the trend of shopping in retail parks and noted that we need to look at transport links to get the footfall back into town centres. The Chair agreed and noted the importance of the unique architecture in our town centres.

The Director of Prosperity & Development acknowledged these points and noted that the purpose and use of our town centres has changed. The Director emphasised that it is important that we change the way we look at town centres and that we instead look at them as the social hubs of our communities. We also have to effectively look at what people need on their doorstep. The Director also pointed out that we have seen a steady increase in footfall in our town centres, particularly since the pandemic.

Another Member queried the next steps in terms of regeneration in Tonypany, whether the team are co-working with the police in terms of anti-social behaviour in town centres and the impact this could have on footfall. The Director advised following the recent work on preparing a strategy for Aberdare, which is a 'bottom-up' town centre strategy and engaging with key stakeholders, that the Town where we will consider preparing a strategy is Tonypany. In respect of ASB, the Police are key consultees on our strategies and the team work closely with the Police Designing Out Crime Officer on town centre regeneration. The design process involves co working with the police. The Chair emphasised that there is a significant problem to address with ASB in town centres.

Discussions continued and a Member pointed out that improving public transport should be a priority. The Director of Frontline Services acknowledged this problem and noted that Bus operators have a problem attracting and sustaining bus drivers but that the Council is constantly trying to keep that provision going.

Another Member praised the ongoing work by the Council in town centres. The Chair queried if Climate Change and Green Spaces was a factor in the strategy. The Head of Regeneration informed Members that a series of interventions are being introduced in respect of green spaces this will be built in going forward for RCT's town centre strategies.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**;

- i. To note the progress on the development and delivery of town centre regeneration strategies and placemaking plans in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- ii. To provide further timely updates to the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Committee.

The Director of Corporate Estates introduced his report to provide an update to members of the Climate Change, Frontline Services & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee with regards to the progress of the Corporate Decarbonisation Strategy and embedded Action Plan following its formal adoption at the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee on the 23rd March 2023](#).

The Director subsequently handed over to The Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction and to the Principal Carbon Reduction Officer who provided the update to Members using a Power Point presentation.

Following this, Members had the opportunity to ask questions.

The Chair queried what impact budget restraints and cut backs would have on the decarbonisation plan going forward. The Chair requested regular update reports back to the Scrutiny Committee. The Director advised that the cost of carbon neutral is a piece of work that is currently ongoing, which should be completed by early next financial year. It was also emphasised that the team have also been very successful in obtaining grants to cover projects and posts etc.

The Chair also raised a query in respect of procurement and asked how the Council intends to bring on local companies to deliver on the carbon neutral plan. The Director of Corporate Estates referenced the development of a carbon calculator for contractors to start using to establish what their actual carbon emissions are.

The Director also noted that as part of the Welsh Government guidelines used to calculate our Carbon Footprint, every £1M spent on capital projects is multiplied by a carbon factor which is used to calculate the assumed emissions.

It is hoped that there will be more accurate reporting in the future when the Council encourages contractors to use the emissions toolkit and calculator. The Principal Carbon Reduction Officer also advised that it is designed for SME's as well as bigger companies.

Discussion ensued and another Member queried how much money the Council saves with the use of Solar Panels. The Principal Carbon Reduction Officer advised that the figures are available and that they can be circulated to Members following the meeting.

The Chair further queried if we are working with the National Grid and Partners to achieve our plan. The Principal Carbon Reduction Officer advised that the Council does work with its partners and that the most efficient way of drawing energy is stopping you drawing it from the Grid. The Officer advised that there is export as well and there is an annual income report on that as well that can be shared with Members.

Discussion continued and a Member queried if the Council is working with local builders to encourage them to do as much as they can. The Director advised that there is a project ongoing in Pontypridd at the moment and they are putting Solar Panels on that and that there are instances where solar panels are being used but people won't see them as they will be a part of the slating. From a planning perspective, energy efficient solar panels comes as part of the sign off. In terms of encouraging local builders, the Director of Prosperity & Development

advised that the Empty Property Grants gives opportunity now for additional money for solar Panel and energy efficiency projects. The LDP review will also look at local energy efficient measures as well.

The Head of Carbon Reduction emphasised that the decarbonisation strategy is how we decarbonise the Council's footprint and that the Local Energy Area Plan (LEAP) comes in when looking at the wider County Borough as a whole. It was noted that the plan is still in the development phase and should be finished by May next year and that will give an insight into how the rest of the County Borough can be encouraged to decarbonise.

The Director of Corporate Estates referred to the savings made from Solar Panels and advised that the Council generates more that £120,000 per Annum from feed in tariffs.

Following discussion, Members **RESOLVED**:

- i. To support the implementation and delivery of the Council's Corporate Decarbonisation Strategy and Action Plan; and,
- ii. To receive further timely updates and updated cost figures as targets progress.

31 Urgent Business

There was no urgent business to report.

32 Chairs Review & Close

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and wished everyone a Happy Christmas and Happy New Year.

This meeting closed at 6.22 pm

**Councillor C Middle
Chair.**