



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE, FRONTLINE SERVICES and PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 February 2024

THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2022-2025

'THINK CLIMATE RCT'

QUARTER 2 UPDATE

REPORT OF THE

SERVICE DIRECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Committee with a second 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 the potential areas for further consideration as part of the Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.
- 2.3 Notes the work to progress and further embed the Council's response to Climate Change into the business of the Council as part of the development of the Council's new Corporate Plan.
- 2.4 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 to be 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. This work to embed our response to the impact of changes in climate is continuing through the development of the new Corporate Plan. The new plan will be in place from April 2024, and is currently the subject of wide-ranging engagement.
- 4.7 This report provides an overview of progress against ['Think Climate RCT'](#) during Quarter 2, 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 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'.
- 5.2 In Quarter 1, the format of the update was well received by the [Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee](#) at its meeting on 27 September. However, the Sub Committee requested further information in respect of the Procurement element of the Carbon Footprint be included. This has been developed in this Quarter 2 summary for Members' consideration in advance of further and more detailed information reports in respect of procurement issues. The Procurement Service is also developing a detailed information/training session for elected Members to support their skills and knowledge in this area.
- 5.3 In considering the Quarter 1 update in [October 2023](#), this Committee was advised that Climate Change is being included in the Member development programme. Part of this approach to further assist Members' understanding of Climate Change, is the Council's recently introduced e learning resource 'Think Climate RCT'. This e learning, available through RCT Source, was initially notified to elected Members through the Members' Newsletter for 20-24 November.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

Summary of progress to 30 September 2023

COUNCIL SPECIFIC

Our Carbon Footprint

We submitted the calculation of the Council's 2022/23 Carbon Footprint to Welsh Government in September 2023. The Footprint was calculated in accordance with Welsh Government's national carbon reporting requirements. Whilst it appears there has been a reduction in our [reported](#) carbon emissions of 120,907.4 tonnes CO₂ since 2021/22, any reduction cannot be confirmed until the data is ratified by Welsh Government.

Energy Efficiency and renewable energy

The Council continues to implement its Carbon Reduction Programme, including 7 completed roof top Solar PV installations, and a further 7 installations currently out to tender. We are also progressing the inventory of Council Buildings that will inform programming of further Solar PV installations on suitable buildings. The new process to identify projects for the Carbon Reduction Programme through a review of energy audits and Display Energy Certificate data is strengthening the evidence base to target and prioritise carbon reduction opportunities across the Council's buildings. The [School Eco Awards](#) launched on 6 October also embeds energy/carbon reduction into the award criteria. In addition to the Carbon Reduction Programme, we continue to seek opportunities to fund decarbonisation projects and have sought grant funding of up to £960K since 2022/23. As at mid-October 2023, £947K of grant funding has been awarded.

Fleet

Progress in implementing a plan to transition our fleet to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles agreed by [Cabinet in September 2022](#) has slowed, given its dependence on availability of vehicles and

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lack of grant funding. However, we are currently working collaboratively with Welsh Government and, currently, seven other Councils across Wales to maximise our procurement and spending power for a joint purchase of electric vehicles so that we can collectively benefit as part of a high-volume order, competing more effectively with demand e.g. from private sector couriers. Further detail will be available in Q3. We are also preparing to implement a new phase of the Fleet Maximisation Project to continue to ensure that services have access to vehicles that best meet their needs, as these needs change. This will allow us to monitor underutilised vehicles and make financial and carbon reduction savings where needed. To further reduce private car mileage travelled by staff, 15 pool vehicles for business travel will be made more widely available from Ty Elai (4), Sardis (3) and Ty Glantaf (8). The Pool cars will be booked through a bespoke in house online booking system, currently being tested. To date 2 of the vehicles are currently EV, as the usage grows through the online booking portal, we will monitor daily mileage and hope to roll out more EVs in the pool car network.

Council Buildings, including schools

- Information about our School Investment Projects, including Net Zero Carbon Primary School for Glyncoch, can be found [here](#).
- Delivered a summer maintenance programme that includes boiler replacements and LED lighting upgrades.
- Treorchy Comprehensive School and Ysgol Garth Olwg have been selected to receive Net Zero reports as part of a Welsh Government funded project to provide Net Zero reports for schools across Wales. The Project will be delivered by AECOM.
- Continuing to deliver the Office Accommodation Strategy 'Fit for the Future' and the Council's Operating Model and Working Arrangements Policy approved by [Cabinet in May 2023](#) locating Council buildings/services in buildings closer to the people that use, work and visit them and/or are accessible by public transport including the move of the Council Headquarters from the Pavilions, Clydach Vale to Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd.

Procurement of Goods and Services

Based on the 2021/22 Carbon Footprint calculation, 67.55% of the Council's Carbon Footprint can be attributed to Procured Goods and Services. Of these goods and services, the four highest carbon emitting categories are Construction; Social Care Services; Transportation, Buses, Minibuses and Taxi Services and Fleet Services. The total carbon emission calculated from these categories amounts to 86% of the procured goods and services. As a result, these areas are being prioritised for carbon reduction support.

More widely, all opportunities for business to tender for Council contracts feature standard questions about carbon reduction, including a company's knowledge of its own carbon footprint, ability to calculate and/or reduce its footprint and ideas to further reduce carbon if its tender was successful. Also in its [Policy Note WPPN06/21](#), Welsh Government recommended that companies tendering for a authority contract in excess of £5M, must evidence their own company's plans to reduce carbon through its own [Carbon Reduction Plan](#).

For those companies already supplying goods and services, the Council has developed and tested a Carbon Calculator which companies can use to calculate their carbon emissions. Anecdotal feedback from suppliers that have tested the Calculator to date has been positive. So far as we know, the Carbon Calculator is a unique product as a result has attracted interest from the Welsh Local Government Association, Business Wales and Welsh Government. The Carbon Calculator is scheduled for publication/launch as part of a new Procurement Website during Quarter 3.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

Staff Awareness

We continue to raise staff awareness. In the last quarter we have continued to raise our Carbon reduction commitments in staff induction training, management briefings and across the performance management and governance processes. The e-learning module was available for 'soft launch' in September, with wider distribution in Q3.

ACROSS THE COUNTY BOROUGH

Think Climate PEOPLE

1. 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 ongoing campaign for [the roll out of the new recycling arrangements](#) to support the changes introduced in July 2023 with a new '[find your collection day](#)' facility, raising awareness of [engagement events about the Coed Ely Solar Farm](#), the announcement of new allotment sites in Ynysybwl and a range of national climate and environmental campaigns.
2. Promoted eight national/local campaigns including '[Plastic Free July](#)', '[Allotments Week](#)' in August and '[Second Hand September](#)' to residents and staff.
3. Held face to face engagement with residents in Town Centres, libraries and network events as part of ongoing Climate Conversation.
4. Raised awareness of the launch of [the RCT Eco Schools award](#) on 6 October 2023.
5. Officially opened 'Canolfan Calon Taf' at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park on 6 August as part of the Park's centenary celebrations at the 'Big Bite' event. The centre aims to engage people in their local environment, contribute to activities with positive climate impact and increase expertise and a love of nature.
6. Continued to promote and support sustainable local food with a focus on food pantries and working with Bryncynon Strategy project that will increase the coordination and availability of food and the buying power of the consortium.
7. Submitted the Council's bid for 'Sustainable Food Places' Bronze Award in September. Decision will be communicated to the Council in November 2023.
8. Provided support to residents in two energy advice 'roadshows' with Trivallis Housing Association.
9. Continued to work with third sector and community partners to maximise our resources and showcase areas of expertise and numerous environmental volunteering opportunities across the County Borough.
10. The '[Think Climate RCT](#)' webpage continues to be refreshed to ensure it remains up to date, fit for purpose and aligns to the newly released Welsh Government campaign through [Climate Action Wales](#).

Think Climate PLACES

1. The land based Solar Farm in Coed Ely was subject to local consultation between [11 July and 8 August](#). The project is now in final planning stage and if agreed, work will start during 2024.
2. Feasibility studies have been completed for Dare Valley and Treforest Weir hydro schemes, with results due to be received in Q3.
3. Received a favourable feasibility report for a Geothermal Project in the former Lewis Merthyr Colliery. Environmental studies now underway in advance of seeking planning approval.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

4. [Announced the development of new allotment](#) site in [Ynysybwll](#) following the securing of Welsh Govt funding. There will be 14 full size plots within the site which is scheduled for completion in March 2024 ready for new growing season.
5. The Amgen 1.5 MW single wind turbine was operational from 15 September. The first five weeks were used as a test period. It is anticipated that the turbine will generate 3,300 MW hours per annum, dependent on wind conditions.
6. Work to procure a 200KW Solar PV development to decarbonise energy consumption at the waste water treatment plant in Bryn Pica has slowed following refusal of a network connection by National Grid. Officers are currently considering options.
7. Worked with [T & C Recycling](#) to legally recycle/reuse seized/forfeited clothing including T shirts, trainers, jumpers, hoodies and tracksuits. Goods went to homeless shelters and homeless people on the streets following rebranding or shredded for disposal as rags.
8. Continued to use grant funding streams to increase the number of EV charging points in place on Council owned public car parks/public, community centre and leisure/education sites. Further information can be found on the Council's [EV Charging Strategy](#) and [EV Charging Web page](#).
9. Started the upgrade [work on the Rhondda Fach Active Travel route at Maerdy/Ferndale](#) and continued to develop Active Travel routes for Treorchy/Treherbert and Cwmbach as part of the Cynon Trail.
10. Obtained WG funding for 2023/25 to create an additional 30 'Nature on your Doorstep' sites on Council owned land, supporting the Living Landscape Project. This was accompanied by additional funding for two Biodiversity Officer posts until at least, March 2025. Suitable sites are currently being considered, Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee [27 September](#) refers.

Think Climate PROSPERITY

The Council continues to support people in poverty, which in turn also reduces carbon emissions and making existing homes more energy efficient. We are continuing to develop our new Affordable Warmth Strategy. In the meantime, we continued to deliver strategic schemes including making information available about the Welsh Government's Warm Home '[Nest](#)' scheme and prepared for implementation of ECO 4 Flex Scheme, following the [Delegated Decision](#) on 8 September. We are awaiting the outcome of a joint funding bid by 'Trustmark' and Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB for the Phase 2 Innovation Project. If agreed, this project will support joint targeting of households eligible for ECO 4 or other 'Heat and Save' interventions for residents affected by living in cold related homes. However, we continue to work with CTMUHB to establish referral pathways in the event that the bid is unsuccessful. This quarter

- 37 new Heating Grant applications were received.
- 21 Heating Grants were completed, £73k grants awarded.
- 10 referrals were made to the Housing Energy Officer, for advice on energy saving measures or assistance that could help them with their bills.
- 35 Solar Panel Grant applications were received.
- 34 Solar Panel Grants were completed, £37k grants awarded.

We also:

1. [Amended the timetable](#) for the development and adoption of the Council's Local Development Plan to take account of new/proposed changes in respect of Welsh Government policy/arrangements for biodiversity, flood risk, town centres and roads review.

CLIMATE CHANGE – contributing to our Carbon Reduction Targets

2. [Launched the new RCT eco School Awards](#) in Pontypridd High School on 6 October featuring categories for biodiversity and nature, energy and carbon saving and waste and recycling.
3. Progressed our plans to develop a Sustainable Toolkit for tourism business owners and continued to work with the Valleys Regional Park on current plans to promote sustainable tourism and strengthen recycling arrangements.
4. Worked with Business Improvement Districts, providing information/updates that they can use to access relevant support information in respect of sustainability.
5. Finalised preparations for the launch in Q3, of the Carbon Calculator that suppliers can use to identify and reduce their carbon footprints.

The associated action plan can be viewed [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. The Tackling Climate Change Strategy 'Think Climate RCT' sets out a framework of action the Council will take to make significant progress, and lays 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 a 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 six months of 2023/24. Whilst the Council can demonstrate positive steps towards meeting Carbon reductions targets across the Council's services 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 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

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 February 2024

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

[‘THINK CLIMATE RCT’](#)

QUARTER 2 UPDATE

Report of the Director of Democratic Services and Communications

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