



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET SUB COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the Virtual meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub Committee held on Thursday, 7 March 2024 at 10.00 am.

This meeting was recorded, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present:

Councillor C Leyshon (Chair)

Councillor A Crimmings Councillor M Norris
Councillor W Owen

Officers in attendance

Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Lawson, Performance Manager
Mr M Crumbie, Head of Procurement Delivery
Dennis, Service Manager Community Development
Ms C O'Neill, Strategic Arts & Culture Manager
Ms A Richards, Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation
Mr P Dukes, Principal Carbon Reduction Officer
Mr D Emson, Community Programmes Manager
Mr A Roberts, Head of Energy & Carbon Reduction

Apologies for absence

Councillor R Lewis

16 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

17 Minutes

The Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st December 2023 as an accurate record.

18 Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee Site Visits

The Chair of the Sub-Committee advised that during the Municipal Year, the Cabinet's work programme was shared with the County Youth Forum, to ascertain whether there were any specific areas that the young people of RCT may wish to get involved with. The Chair noted that a key area identified by the young people was Climate Change and as such, explained that it felt appropriate that the young people take forward engagement with the Council's Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee.

On the 5th March, several young people chosen from the County Youth Forum attended a site visit with the Sub-Committee to view some of the Council's Living Landscape projects. It was explained that prior to the visit, the young people had mixed views as to what a Living Landscape project was and how it could help impact against climate change. However, following the visit, the young people agreed that the projects:

- Provided Networked sites that allow habitats to evolve and adapt to change;
- Prevented species being isolated;
- Provided an environment for innovative and active engagement with local people; and
- Provided Nature based solutions directly contributing to climate change mitigation.

The young people also agreed that the projects were a good use of funding by Welsh Government and the Council and felt that further promotion of such projects was needed.

The Chair was extremely pleased to have the young people in attendance at the visit and commented that both Members and young people can learn from one other in terms of the best approaches to take forward to protect the planet for the future.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure echoed the Chair's comments and agreed that the visit had been incredibly educational. The Cabinet Member was grateful for the opportunity to hear the views of the young people and have a two-way conversation about such vital topics. The Cabinet Member spoke of the positive feedback she'd received from young people following the visit and praised the officers for their work.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity also spoke positive of the visit and took the opportunity to thank the officers involved. The Cabinet Member commented that the visit had been informative and was pleased to note how engaged the young people had been.

The Council's Ecologist thanked the Members for their comments and echoed that the visit had been a success. The officer spoke of the unique position of RCT, in that it's surrounded by nature and biodiversity. The officer recognised the interest of the public in terms of local places and biodiversity; and explained that work was being undertaken to promote the good work of the Council.

The Chair thanked the officer and Members for their comments.

19 Procured Goods & Services

The Head of Procurement provided Members with an update on the Council's compliance with the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023.

Members were provided with information in respect of the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023, which became law in Wales during 2023. The Act makes it a criminal offence to supply or offer to supply (including for free) certain single-use plastic products to

consumers in Wales. It was explained that the law bans the sale or supply of certain single-use plastic products in Wales, unless an exemption applies (details of the exemptions are provided with the Statutory Guidance supporting the Act). Any organisation that does not comply with the Act will be committing a criminal offence and will be subject to a financial penalty.

The officer assured the Sub-Committee that all items listed within 'Phase 1' of the legislation were removed during 2020 and that exceptions were in place such as plastic straws, but the criteria adhered to the Act. The officer continued, explaining that over and above those items listed in 'Phase 1' of the Act, the Council had endeavoured to remove as many single use items (not just plastic) from its services as possible.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and was pleased to note that the Council was well prepared and would not be impacted by the introduction of the ban on products due to work already undertaken by the Procurement Service over the past three years.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity praised the officers for being a step ahead and undertaking such importance work prior to the establishment of the Environmental Protection (Single-use Plastic Products) (Wales) Act 2023 became law in Wales during 2023.

The Cabinet Member noted from the report that the Facilities Cleaning Service had trialled the use of disposable pods, as an alternative to the 750ml single-use plastic cleaning bottles and asked for further detail on the outcome of the trial. The officer explained that by using the disposable pods, the Council were cutting down on the use of large plastic bottles. The officer advised that the way of working had quickly been implemented by staff and that the positive feedback was being used as part of the tender.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure thanked the officers for their work and felt that the work would evidence to young people that the Council were leading by example.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To review the content of the report and be satisfied that the Council complies with the Act;
2. To note the Council's upcoming work to ensure compliance with future phases of the legislation; and
3. To note the work that is progressing to reduce other single-use items that are not specifically listed within the Act.

20 Energy Generation Projects

The Director of Corporate Estates and the Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction provided the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee with details of the work underway on the development of renewable energy projects and certain other Carbon Reduction related issues.

The following projects were highlighted to Members, outlining the successes and

future works required with key updates being provided from the contents of the report:

- 6MW Solar Farm Installation;
- Hydro Electricity Prospects;
- Carbon Reduction Programme;
- Geo-Thermal Technology;
- Amgen Developments (Nant y Gwyddon wind turbine and Bryn Pica site); and
- Local Area Energy Plan (or LAEP).

The Chair spoke positive of the vast amount of work put into each project listed in the report before Members, which would make a significant contribution to the Council achieving its Carbon targets.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity echoed the Chair's comments, noting the various projects underway and in the pipeline.

The Cabinet Member noted from the report that the Council was previously successful in obtaining two grid connections from NG in pursuit of its aspirations to generate renewable energy, the first option for 4.2MW at 11kV and a second for 6MW at 33kV; and that discussions had been underway, for some time, with several developers who have plans to construct wind turbines on land adjoining to that owned by the Council. The Cabinet Member sought further information on the viability of the connections. The Head of Energy and Carbon Reduction advised that the 4.2MW connection in Abergoki had weight loss charges that meant that the project was not viable to the Council and as such, the offer was novated to a 'national' developer to enable them to realise the full potential of their adjacent site. The officer advised that the Council had a guaranteed 2.5% stake in the project, with the option of buying back into the scheme in the future. In respect of the 6MW connection and the significant increase in the latest estimate applied by NGED, the officer informed the Sub-Committee that this was a result of cost of living and inflationary pressures in the market. Due to the considerable increase in cost, the potential viability of the project would need to be reassessed and as such, early discussions were underway with a local company looking to develop a windfarm adjacent to the site to establish if there were any partnership opportunities.

The Director added that a lot of due diligence and feasibility studies are put into each project, but unfortunately, it sometimes gets to the point where the Council must look at alternative options with the grid connection. The Director explained that the grid connection is applied for as a starting point to ensure a concept could work, but that there is a long waiting list of up to five years for spare capacity. The Director assured the Sub-Committee that the Council would make best use of the grid connections secured with the various projects.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure was pleased to note the exciting and innovative projects listed within section 5 of the report and queried if it would be possible to link with schools and community groups to involve young people in some of the projects going forward. The Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation echoed the Cabinet Member's comment

and advised that schools would welcome involvement, particularly with the hydro projects. The officer advised that secondary schools would be particularly active in such projects and that STEM is part of the new curriculum for Wales.

One Member questioned where, if any, the spare grid capacity in RCT was located, to which the Director confirmed there was none available. It was explained that the Council could currently only apply and get confirmation of anything under 1MW, which was where the smaller scale hydro schemes were of benefit.

The Member also questioned if the solar farm in Tyla Garw, Pontyclun had been included in RCT's offset of carbon. The Director informed the Member that Tyla Garw might be accounted for as part of the Local Area Energy Plan for the County Borough rather than the Council.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of the update report as part of the ongoing work of the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee; and
2. To agree to receive further reports during 2024 and 2025, providing updates on progress within key areas.

21 Costed Carbon Reduction Plan

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director of Corporate Estates and the Principal Carbon Reduction Officer provided a verbal update to the Sub-Committee on the Counting the Cost of Decarbonisation project.

The presentation covered:

- The Council Adopted Decarbonisation Strategy & Action Plan March 2023;
- The need to develop financial costings to decarbonise the Council activities as part of the Action Plan;
- Engagement with Carbon Trust in October 2023 to develop the modelling tool; and
- Assurance that the Final Report's findings will be used to develop costed business cases for future decarbonisation projects.

The Director explained that good progress had been made and that, once complete, a further update would be provided to the Climate Change Cabinet Sub-Committee.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity commended officers for the huge amount of work undertaken to calculate the carbon usage.

The Chair echoed comments and thanked officers for the informative presentation.

22 Sustainable Food

The Community Programmes Manager provided the Sub-Committee with information on the work undertaken since 2020 in relation to Sustainable Food Places and the planned programme of work for 2024-25.

Members' attention was drawn to sections 6 and 7 of the report, which detailed the significant progress, milestones, and impact of the Sustainable Food Places work.

Following RCT Food Partnership's achievement of the Sustainable Food Places Bronze, the officer informed the Sub-Committee that the next development phase would concentrate effort towards achieving the Silver Award, with the intention to devise a strategy to support future developments longer term.

The Chair thanked the officer for the comprehensive report and praised RCT service areas for their close partnership working. The Chair spoke of the RCT Food partnership, which was awarded the Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award on 8th November 2023, the joint-third (alongside Carmarthenshire County Council) Welsh Local Authority to receive the award since the framework was initiated in 2015. The Chair noted that the partnership was a passionate mix of members from community groups, public bodies and food businesses from all around the County and commented on how professionally it was run.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure congratulated the team on achieving the Bronze Award and was also pleased to note the partnership work to benefit communities. The Cabinet Member raised concerns in respect of out-of-date food and queried if there was capacity for the Food Co-Ordinator to offer support to smaller foodbanks in terms of stock rotation and the prevention, where possible, of out-of-date food. The officer stated that he would be happy to have a conversation with foodbanks to offer further support as the Cabinet Member suggested. Members were also informed of an active offer through the Community Development Team to provide community training, which could be used to offer a training package alongside the community groups in relation to stock rotation opportunities.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity spoke of the position many found themselves in as a result of the pandemic and praised the vast amount of partnership work undertaken by the Council, businesses, community groups and foodbanks to provide support to those who need it most. The Cabinet Member suggested that the Council promote the work further on its website and the officer explained that a new website was in progress, along with a Community Development quarterly newsletter.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the progress reported, the planned expenditure, and how this contributes to the broader objectives of the Councils Tackling Climate Change Strategy 2022-2025: [‘Think Climate RCT’](#)

23 Schools Eco Award

The Service Director of 21st Century Schools and Transformation provided the Sub-Committee with an overview of progress in the launch and delivery of the RCT Schools Eco Award (Bronze Award), where participating schools are positively contributing to the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

The Chair thanked the Service Director for the report and took the opportunity to speak of previous visits to schools, whereby pupils were engaged and knowledgeable about climate change.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Leisure praised the work of the schools and suggested that the Cabinet be invited to future visits alongside the Chair and the Cabinet Member for Education, Youth Participation and Welsh Language. The Cabinet Member was pleased to note that contractors were fully on board with the work of the schools to successfully achieve the Bronze Award.

The Cabinet Member for Development and Prosperity acknowledged the huge appetite of all schools for climate change and eco-friendly projects. In relation to the previous report, the Cabinet Member spoke of the use of school pantries run by students to support families with food inflation and the cost-of-living crisis.

The Service Director responded to the comments and welcomed Members to visit School Council meetings for the young people to have the opportunity to share their good work in respect of the tackling climate change agenda. The Service Director advised that she would organise future visits.

Referring to the comments made about school pantries, the Service Director spoke of the passion in schools to eliminate food waste and the different practices in place to meet those targets, such as recycling food.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. To consider the information contained within the report; and
2. To note any considerations that could be implemented in the Silver Award which will be launched at the beginning of the next academic year (2024/2025).

This meeting closed at 11.18 am

**Councillor C Leyshon
Chair.**

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