

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 20th April, 2021.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#)

Present: Councillor Ms. B.E. Brooks (Chairman); Councillor Ms. S. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Mrs. P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, G. John, M.J.G. Morgan, A.R. Robertson and S.T. Wiliam.

Also Present: Councillor L. Burnett (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration) and Councillor P.G. King (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services and Transport).

560 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

561 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors V.J. Bailey and L.O. Rowlands.

562 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

563 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

564 PROJECT ZERO – DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE PLAN (REF) –

Cabinet, on 22nd March, 2021 had endorsed the draft Climate Change Challenge Plan and referred it on to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration as part of the consultation process.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation presented the draft Climate Change Challenge Plan which set out the Council’s response to the climate emergency and the work that would be undertaken as part of Project Zero.

The draft Plan detailed 18 challenges and the steps the Council proposed to take to meet those challenges as part of Project Zero. These challenges were framed around the need to demonstrate strong leadership, fulfil the Council's responsibility to current and future generations and to make a difference now.

The draft Plan also detailed some of the work already underway across the Council as part of work to adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change. This work also formed part of Project Zero.

The report set out the details for the consultation on the draft Plan which would timetable for the Plan being approved post consultation and the proposed governance arrangements for Project Zero including scrutiny.

In providing their initial thoughts, Members of the Committee made the following comments or queries:

- In terms of protecting the environment, carbon was just one aspect. There should be more focus on the use of plastics, bio detergents and heavy metals. The use of plastic packaging was a major worry.
- What was the Council doing with regard to electric vehicles and charging points.
- Was it not correct that charging points could only be located in areas agreed by Western Power.
- What was the impact of the draft plan on Planning policy and what were the implications on new housing developments.
- What were the added costs for building a carbon neutral home.
- How would the Vale get more people to engage with the consultation, particularly those in rural locations, for example could roadshows be organised.
- Some Community Councils would have little time to consider the draft plans, so was there scope for the consultation period to be extended.
- For rural areas, travel and transport and multi-generational living in small communities was an important consideration. Rural bus services were infrequent and out of date. The Council should look at how transport links between rural and built-up areas could be improved.
- How did the Draft Plan compare to plans of other local authorities.
- There was agreement with the need to effect behavioural change with the general public but how would this be gauged, and success measured.
- Was there a specific Council target to offset the carbon footprint for any new development not just new housing projects.
- How did the development of the Barry Incinerator fit in with the Council's plans.

In reply to comments made by the Members of the Committee, Officers advised:

- The use of plastics was within the Plan, and a good example of something already introduced was changes to the procurement practice stipulating a reduction in the amount of plastic used. In addition, the Council would try and encourage people to change their behaviour.

- With regards to electric charging points, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that some were currently being built in Barry through the Cardiff City Deal. More would be then be developed for other parts of the Vale including, Llantwit Major, Penarth and Cowbridge. The charging points were currently dedicated for taxis but there was funding from Welsh Government for dedicated on-street points. It was agreed that the locations of the charging points would be shared with the Members. In addition, the Head of Regeneration and Planning stated that the Council was currently working with Welsh Government regarding charging points for domestic homes and businesses. These would be an important part of new regeneration schemes and it was hoped that charging points would offer commercial opportunities once an initial roll out had been completed.
- In terms of the impact on Planning, the Head of Regeneration and Planning indicated that the impacts would also be in conjunction with Building Control regulations, particularly in relation to changes around gas boilers and the use of new technology. It was anticipated that in the future and perhaps within six months, there would be tighter restrictions around home boilers which was in line with Welsh Government targets for the building of carbon neutral homes.
- In relation to the consultation process, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that initially, the Council wanted to have views of the challenges set out in the Plan and to understand the kind of appetite the public had for change. This would then provide a steer of how the Council would proceed to facilitate that change.
- The Council had devised a detailed consultation programme, which included engagement with schools and Town/Community Councils, a social media campaign and on-line survey. The current climate however, made roadshows a challenge so most consultation would be on-line.
- It was recognised that the Council had developed a tight timetable which had the aim of allowing the Plan to be approved by Full Council before the August recess. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that there would be consideration of whether there was some scope to extend the consultation deadline. Ongoing engagement with the public as the Plan developed and implemented was also just as important.
- Engagement with schools would a good example of ongoing consultation which would be carried out as the Plan was implemented and not just during the initial eight-week period. Working with schools was important in order to build relationships around how the Council could support them and as a way of the Council sharing its experiences as well as understanding the views of young people which would help inform the Plan.
- With regard to measuring success, the importance of this was highlighted within the Plan under the need to create a robust evidence base. Therefore, ways to measure success would need to be developed.
- In relation to the Barry Incinerator, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that the original 2015 application met the requirements around renewal energy. The issue around the current use of the site had yet to be resolved.
- Around, the commitment to offset carbon footprint for all new types of developments, not just housing, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation outlined that the commitment within the Plan was for the Council's activities to be carbon neutral by 2030. Where the Plan went wider

and beyond the Council, the aim was to encourage others to reduce their impact. The Head of Regeneration and Planning added that the Planning process would have a role in achieving that, and there would also likely be new legislation around the construction of new buildings and businesses to ensure that carbon targets were met. Solar farms, solar panels and renewable energy would also have a role too.

The Committee also discussed the challenges around flooding and coastal erosion, and it was agreed that a report on this work would be provided. In addition, the Committee queried progress regarding the Section 19 report and the flooding event on 23rd December 2020. Members were advised that the Section 19 report had been delayed due to technical resources associated with the interpretation and assessment of the report findings. This was being progressed and the report would be provided to the Scrutiny Committee.

There being no further comments and having fully considered the reference it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the views of the Environment and Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet, as outlined below:

- Consultation should be as far as reaching as possible with emphasis given to engagement activities with rural communities and those people hard to reach.
- Consideration be given to extending the consultation deadline past the 11th May 2021.
- To highlight the importance of transport links and how rural parts of the Vale and towns could be better connected, with a suggestion for more regular bus/public transport services to be introduced, which should be cheaper and offer a real alternative to travelling by car.
- To highlight that there would be an impact on the Planning process, particularly around the development of new carbon neutral homes.
- To highlight the need for more electric vehicle charging points, but also welcoming the ongoing work with Western Power.
- To consider ways of offsetting the carbon footprint for all new types of developments, not just housing projects.
- The highlight concern around future flooding and coastal erosion events.

Reasons for recommendation

To provide Cabinet with the views of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.