



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group held on Tuesday, 28 January 2020 at 11.00 am at the Committee Room 1, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

County Borough Councillors - Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor R Lewis Councillor M Webber
Councillor M Norris Councillor E Webster

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr P Mee, Director, Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Lawson, Performance Manager
Mr R Waters, Service Director – Frontline Services
Ms L Davies, Service Director – Public Protection Services
Mr C Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager

Invited External Representatives of the Steering Group:-

Mr C Harries – Friends of the Earth
Mr I Thomas – Welcome to our Woods

18 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed the participants to the meeting and introductions were made for the benefit of new officers.

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors A. Crimmings and S. Belzak.

19 Declaration of Interest

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

20 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group, which was held on 18th December 2019.

21 Change to the order of the Agenda

The Steering Group agreed that the agenda would be considered out of sequence, as detailed in the minutes set out hereunder.

Community Engagement

The Corporate Policy and Consultation Manager presented the report, which sought to inform the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group of the proposed approaches to community engagement and communication, to ensure that the its work is driven by the involvement of all key stakeholders to raise awareness of best practice and encourage residents to change their behaviour.

Members' attention was drawn to Section 5 of the report, where the proposed key areas of focus were listed for consideration:

- A) Communications & Social Media activity;
- B) Developing a behavioural change campaign;
- C) Facilitating Involvement; and
- D) Engaging future generations.

The officer proposed the establishment of a Central Climate Change web portal to which all residents and stakeholders could be signposted to raise awareness of current projects, best practice and local and national events and case studies.

In Section 5.18 of the report, a list of groups and individuals had been identified to engage with as part of the wider agenda. The officer stated that it would be essential to build upon the list and establish a database of the key groups/individuals who were championing change and making an impact at a local level.

The officer provided the Steering Group with an example of the engagement undertaken with residents in respect of the Council's Corporate Plan. He spoke of the distribution of 'involvement packs' to certain individuals, which meant they had responsibility for engaging with smaller groups.

In respect of communicating behavioural change, the officer provided the Steering Group with examples of previous high profile, recycling campaigns, which had successfully promoted a positive social change within the Borough.

The Chair thanked the officer for the robust report and commented on the need for collaborative work by the Council, Environmental Groups and the wider community.

One Representative spoke of the Welcome to Our Woods Skyline Vision project, which had sought to identify how a community can change in order to reduce its carbon footprint, and advised that it would be circulated following the meeting. The Steering Group acknowledged that small changes and innovative solutions such as identifying one's carbon footprint and reducing it would empower residents and allow them to take ownership. The Deputy Leader spoke of the 4000 bulbs planted by a community group in Rhydyfelin, which contributed to the change but also had positive benefits for the participants.

The Steering Group spoke of education and the positive influence that social media and the web portal could have on a young person.

The External Representatives were in favour of the approach and were happy to signpost the Council to smaller groups, which had shown commitment to making an impact.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To support the proposed areas of focus:
 - a) Communications & Social Media activity
 - b) Developing a behavioural change campaign
 - c) Facilitating Involvement
 - d) Engaging future generations;
2. To agree for officers to work in partnership with key environmental stakeholders and groups to develop this approach going forward, and seek their engagement in specific communications and engagement activity; and
3. To receive updates on progress at future meetings.

23 Transportation - how do we reduce our carbon emissions and change our modes of transport?

The Service Director, Frontline Services provided the Steering Group with the current situation regarding carbon emissions and transport, in order to identify the steps that can be taken to reduce such emissions.

The Service Director stated that transport growth is linked to the economy and as the economy grows, so does the demand to travel. The Service Director spoke of Welsh Government's ambitious plans for transport decarbonisation, which investment into electric vehicles, such as cars, taxis and buses. It was explained that whilst there are steps that individual councils can take to decarbonise transport, such steps will be more effective where they are delivered under a coordinated strategy on a regional or national basis, where all parties are focussed on achieving a common goal. The Steering Group were informed that RCT is proactive at driving forward projects that are specific to RCT, whilst working at a regional level through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority.

The officer drew Members' attention to Section 3.11 of the report, where a list of the various RCT engagement programmes, which have positive implications for reducing emissions, was outlined. These included the Making Better Use Programme, Safe Routes to School / Safe Routes in Communities, Bus Corridor Enhancements, Parking Enforcement, Subsidised bus services, Park and Ride and Active Travel.

The officer went on to provide the Steering Group with detail into the future opportunities for RCT:

- Metro -
- Electric Vehicles and Charging Infrastructure

Discussions ensued around the Council's work with the CCRC/CCRTA to develop a regional approach to the introduction of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across strategic Council owned sites and on a strategy to convert all taxis to EV by the Welsh Government target date of 2028. Although positive about the initiative, the Steering Group raised a number of concerns, particularly in relation to the current infrastructure in RCT and the challenge that would come with installing charging points in its narrow, terraced streets. The Group Director, Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services agreed, commenting that it would be sensible to avoid any drastic movements with the intention of moving towards more sustainable forms of fuel as the market for suitable vehicles matures and cost effective and fit for purpose solutions emerge. In respect of the Council's fleet vehicles, the Group Director informed the Steering Group that the

results of a costing exercise indicated that it is cheaper to lease vehicles, instead of buying them. As such, the Council would seek to lease fleet vehicles in the short term. He added that the Council is currently trialling hybrid and EV options and will monitor the potential for other sustainable fuel solutions for larger fleet vehicles.

The Steering Group went on to discuss the CCRCD Taxi Strategy for South East Wales with the officer confirming that it would be considered by the Council's Licensing Committee at its meeting in April 2020. The Service Director, Public Protection spoke of the current ten year taxi life within RCT and whether there was a need for it to be relooked at to take into consideration the smaller stages of reaching the ambition of zero emissions by 2028. The Steering Group recognised that valley trade and topography differs to that in Cardiff and that RCT's taxi fleet is further ahead with vehicles being Euro 6 compliant.

In relation to the Metro, one Member queried the timescales of completion, to which the officer stated it would be 2022/2023. The Steering Group spoke positive of the Metro and agreed that it would provide a sustainable transport opportunity to enable car users to switch to public transport for certain journeys. They agreed that whilst the Metro is a significant development, the challenge would be to integrate it with the bus service and the Active Travel Plan.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report.

24 What action can be taken in the air quality management areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Environmental Protection and Housing Standards Manager provided the Steering Group with the report, which sought consideration of the action that can be taken in the Air Quality Management Areas, to ensure air quality improves across the County Borough.

The Steering Group were provided with examples of the 16 Air Quality Management areas identified within Rhondda Cynon Taf and were pleased to note that the majority of the Borough is believed to experience good air quality and that those areas identified were isolated hot spots. They were informed that very specific local circumstances can result in levels of Nitrogen Dioxide that can exceed an Air Quality Objective.

It was recognised that there was a potential for Climate Change to negatively impact upon future air quality and that there was a need to take action to deliver sustainable solutions.

The Steering Group were referred to Appendix 1 of the report, where the individual Air Quality Action Plans were listed. A number of the improvements were considered to be practical in delivering short-term air quality improvement within the Air Quality Management Areas. However, the Steering Group acknowledged that the current transport related issues and infrastructure within RCT would not sufficiently support some of the long-term, sustainable actions identified. It was felt that discussions should continue to take place between the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services and the Group Director of Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services to identify the viable, long-term actions from Table B of the report, to include in the Council's Highway

Capital Programme for Cabinet consideration.

Discussions ensued around community engagement and the Clean Air Day, which is taking place on 20th June 2020, which is funded by the Welsh government and forms part of the wider Clean Air Day campaign across the UK. The Steering Group felt that the Council's participation in the initiative would promote a positive message to its residents but agreed that the correct message would need to be conveyed, whether that be in respect of car sharing, cycling to work or tree planting.

In relation to the grant funding, which had been utilised to deliver improved street lighting to serve the active travel access route to Pontypridd High School, it was acknowledged that the holistic, multi-agenda outcome approach had been essential and had benefited a number of agendas, including local engagement, active travel, air quality, climate change and biodiversity.

The Chair thanked the officer for the detailed report and it was **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report; and
2. To recommend to Cabinet:
 - I. To continue progressing with the short-term and practicable actions identified in Table B of the report;
 - II. That having regard to the current local circumstances, the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services work with the Group Director of Prosperity, Development and Frontline Services to identify the viable, long-term actions from Table B of the report, to include in the Council's Highway Capital Programme for Cabinet consideration; and
 - III. That the Council seek to engage with its residents on the Clean Air Day, which is taking place on 20th June 2020, which is funded by the Welsh government and forms part of the wider Clean Air Day campaign across the UK.

25 Consultation on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf

The Technical Support Officer provided the Steering Group with the report on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy for Rhondda Cynon Taf.

The Steering Group were informed that whilst biodiversity has been lost in certain parts of the UK, Rhondda Cynon Taf is fortunate to have a wide range of native wildflowers growing naturally in its fields, verges and woodlands. All of the plants are perfectly adapted to the soil, climate and habitat and are part of the 'ecosystem' providing food not only for pollinators but for many insects and other animals.

The officer explained that the proposed Rhondda Cynon Taf grassland and grass-verge biodiversity management policy is 'to increase the area and extent of wildflower rich grassland habitat in the County Borough in support of the Council's Biodiversity Duty and 'Action for Nature: the Local Biodiversity Action Plan' and drew Members' attention to Section 4.6 of the report, where the key principles of the Policy were outlined.

The Steering Group were in favour of the proposals to increase the number of

sites in wildflower management and to establish a Biodiversity website, which would be used to engage the community by providing information and raise awareness. It was felt that a clear message would need to be promoted to ensure that communities are fully aware that the uncut grass is a positive measure. As such, Members were of the view that appropriate signage would need to be established at the sites.

Discussions ensued around the 'Grab a Rake' campaign, which had been devised to involve the local community in the management of some of the grass verges left for biodiversity. Members spoke positive of including the community in the campaign and the additional education value, commenting that community ownership is essential in raising awareness. One Member of the Steering Group spoke of her own experiences with similar community initiatives and acknowledged that smaller, cost-effective schemes contribute to the wider agenda.

The Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To comment on the draft Wildflower Grass Management Policy, and
2. That the feedback and comments of the Climate Control Cabinet Steering Group are reported to Cabinet to inform their decision with regard to the policy.

This meeting closed at 12.25 pm

**COUNCILLOR R LEWIS
CHAIR.**