



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE CABINET STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group held on Wednesday, 17 March 2021 at 2.00 pm.

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

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

Other County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor M Griffiths

Officers in attendance:-

Mr C Bradshaw, Chief Executive
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr N Wheeler, Group Director – Prosperity, Development & Frontline Services
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr D Powell, Director of Corporate Estates
Ms L Lawson, Performance Manager
Mr C Davies, Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager
Mr S Lock, Head of Energy Project Management

Invited External Representatives of the Steering Group:-

Ms H Richards – Friends of the Earth
Mr C Blake – Rhondda Skyline Project

10 Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group and introduced Mr C. Blake, who was in attendance on behalf of Welcome to our Woods.

11 Declaration of Interest

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

12 Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2020 as an accurate reflection.

13 Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy 2021-2025

The Chief Executive provided the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with an opportunity to consider the Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy, which subject to Cabinet approval, would be consulted upon with residents and businesses.

The Chief Executive informed Members that the work undertaken by the Steering Group over the past 18 months had been compiled into a clear strategy for tackling climate change, which had also been aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Chief Executive drew the Steering Group's attention to the Draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy for RCT for the years 2021-2025, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, and welcomed any comments.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the report and acknowledged the Council's positive commitment to meet and contribute to global, national and local targets to reduce carbon across the Council's services and were pleased to note the ambitious targets to achieve the 2030 Net Zero target.

The Vice-Chair was in support of the ambitious Tackling Climate Change Strategy and noted that its development would contribute to all seven national goals, in particular to a Globally Responsible Wales, a more Resilient Wales, a Healthy Wales and a Wales of Cohesive Communities.

One Member noted the ambition of the Council to establish a County Wide network of electric vehicle (EV) charging opportunities, to stimulate market and widen EV charging opportunities but felt that the Strategy should have further focus on residential electric vehicle charging opportunities. The Member reiterated the previous concerns raised by the Steering Group in respect of the logistical difficulties of installing charging points in streets with no off-street parking and charging cables across footways.

Members acknowledged the point in respect of the infrastructure to support the installation of residential electric vehicle charging points and noted that there was a detailed report for further discussion on the agenda. Members agreed that the Council would take an incremental approach due to ever-changing technology and that best practice would be sought from other Local Authorities in the United Kingdom.

Whilst the report stated that there were no financial implications and any investment required to address the priorities being consulted upon would be reported and considered separately as part of the Council's Medium Term Plan, one Member praised the Council for its significant investment in Carbon reduction, through energy saving and building improvements.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for the report and advised that it would be presented to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting later in the month.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the contents of this report and the Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy in the Appendix;
2. To consider the Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy and make recommendations to the Council's Cabinet on the Strategy before the Cabinet considers the Strategy at its meeting later this month. Cabinet will be requested to consider whether it wishes to commence a wide ranging engagement with residents and businesses on the Council's response to Climate Change starting in April 2021; and
3. That the results of the consultation on the Draft Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy are considered by the Climate Changing Steering Group in June prior to the June meeting of Cabinet.

14 Climate Change Communications and Engagement Plan

The Service Director of Democratic Services and Communication provided the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with an update on the proposed approach to community engagement and communication in respect of Climate Change.

The Service Director emphasised the importance of initiating the broader conversation with the community in relation to the importance of tackling climate change in order to encourage behavioural change and community support, in addition to targeting conversation around specific areas such as the Council's Tackling Climate Change Strategy.

The Service Director outlined the suggested virtual by default approach for the ongoing climate change discussion, which took into consideration the associated engagement challenges, which had arisen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Steering Group were informed of the development of the central Climate Change web portal and the ambition to establish a continuous dialogue with residents, with the help of Environmental Groups.

The Service Director proposed a 6-8 week consultation on the Council's Draft Tackling Climate Change Strategy, which would utilise the following channels to raise awareness:

- The 'Let's Talk RCT' website, which would include online documents, surveys, polls and videos;
- Various social media applications;
- Partnership work with community groups; and
- Various virtual engagement sessions.

Members were informed of the intention to establish a detailed engagement and communications plan early in the next Municipal Year, which would include some of the Council's more targeted campaigns for the Steering Group's consideration.

The Chair thanked the Service Director for the Communications and Engagement Plan and noted the enthusiasm already shown by residents in relation to tackling climate change. The Chair spoke of the current restrictions in place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and commented on the importance of making the approach as accessible and user-friendly as possible to reach a wider audience.

The Vice-Chair spoke of the positives of face-to-face interaction with residents and used the Council's budget consultation as an example but was content that the Council would utilise all possible avenues to engage with the community on such an important topic. The Member went on to speak of the Council's previous engagement strategy on recycling and emphasised the importance of using the correct terminology to engage with residents.

One Member spoke of the importance of engaging with young people, which was referenced at Section 4.6 of the report. The Member spoke of the enthusiasm and valuable comments of children and young people in relation to recycling engagement.

One Member echoed the comment made in relation to the importance of engaging with young people and suggested further areas for the Council to consider as part of its engagement plan:

- The Wales wide network of youth climate ambassadors;
- The potential to establish a Climate Assembly, such as the one in Blaenau Gwent; and
- The opportunity to access the Alternative Technology for a Zero-Carbon Britain online training Package.

With the agreement of the Chair, non-Committee Member, County Borough Councillor M. Griffiths spoke on the item and requested that the Council involve the smaller, active community groups in its engagement to which the Chair agreed.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To agree the planned approach to consultation on the draft Climate Change Strategy and the supporting communications/promotion of the consultation, which will take place during April and May 2021;
2. To consider and support the revised approach to the ongoing climate change conversation;
3. To agree for officers to work in partnership with key environmental stakeholders and groups to develop the approach going forward and seek their involvement in specific communications and engagement activity; and
4. To receive updates on progress at future meetings, including feedback on the climate change strategy consultation.

15 Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Driving Change

The Director of Corporate Estates provided the Steering Group with an overview of the Council's medium to longer term plans to develop its electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The Director firstly reminded the Steering Group of its previous consideration of reports in relation to the situation regarding carbon emissions, transport and the steps identified to reduce such emissions. The Director spoke of evidence submitted to Welsh Government by the WLGA, which projected that by 2030, the total number of licensed electric vehicles (EV) in the UK is estimated to reach 13.6 million and achieve 60% of vehicle market share.

Members of the Steering Group were informed of the following areas of work already undertaken by the Council to reduce carbon emissions associated with Transportation:

- Design briefs for all major projects and 21 Century School Band B projects have been amended to include for the provision of EV charging points in all future projects;
- The installation of EV charging points at recently completed projects;
- Working with the CCRTA to secure £1.3M of Welsh Government funding during 2021 to establish a network of EV charging points for taxis across the region;
- Working with the CCRTA to develop proposals to install 22KW charge points at a range of council owned sites across the region;
- The trialling of hybrid and EV options as well as monitoring the potential for other sustainable fuel solutions for larger fleet vehicles, such as hydrogen; and
- Exploring the feasibility of installing car park solar canopies at one of the Council leisure centres, with the opportunity to incorporate EV charging points in the scheme if it becomes a live project.

The Director referred Members to Section 5 of the report, which detailed the progress made by neighbouring Local Authorities and the Private Sector, many of which had made the provision of EV charging points available for their residents and customers.

The Director spoke of the need to develop an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for the Council with short, medium and long term goals to address the future demands of RCT and advised that the strategy would sit alongside new planning policies adopted within the Council but would need to be reviewed and updated as and when regional initiatives and/or demand for EV changes in the future. The Director advised that, where possible, the Council would seek to explore any funding opportunities to successfully deliver the change.

The Chair thanked the Director and officers for the detailed report. The Chair spoke of the increase in demand for electrical vehicles by residents and was pleased to note the Council's pro-active approach to meet the demands of users within the County Borough.

The Vice-Chair spoke positive of the work undertaken by the Council to reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation and was particularly pleased to note that the Council were considering its own fleet. The Member spoke of the importance of seeking best practice from other Local Authorities and of a broad consultation, which would provide a better insight into the demands of residents.

One Member referred to the map of RCT showing potential EV charging locations, which was attached at Appendix III to the report and suggested that the Council take into consideration the upper-Rhondda Fawr area. Furthermore, the Member raised concerns in respect of the power supply available for EV charging points and the limitations of the OLEV grant, which meant many residents within the Borough, without off-street parking would not be eligible.

The Head of Energy Project Management acknowledged the Member's comments in relation to the power issues across South Wales and advised that the Distribution Network Operators were in the process of changing to

Distribution System Operators with the aim of making the network more flexible and accessible.

One Member spoke of the Regional Transport meetings and how encouraging it was to work alongside other Local Authorities to share lessons learned and best practice.

With the agreement of the Chair, non-Committee Member, County Borough Councillor M. Griffiths spoke on the item and requested that the Council consider various locations in the South of the Borough for EV charging points, namely Llantrisant Leisure Centre and a public car park within Pontyclun. The Member was of the view that the installation of EV charging points at a Park and Ride would cause issues as a vehicle could be left there all day with a charging point out of use.

The Director of Corporate Estates thanked the Members for their suggestions and comments and advised that they would be considered.

The Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group **RESOLVED:**

1. To note the content of the report and acknowledge that there is a real ambition within the Council to drive change in respect of the EV charging infrastructure across the County Borough;
2. To continue with the good work already ongoing such as continuing with a trial of EV's for use in the Council's fleet;
3. That officers develop an EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy to sit alongside a Transport Strategy and future Planning Policies; and
4. That an implementation plan will be developed to deliver projects alongside the Strategy.

16 Urgent Business

With the agreement of the Chair, the following updates were provided to the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group:

- Mr C Blake provided the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group with an update on the progress of the Rhondda Skyline Project. Mr Blake informed the Steering Group that the initial agreement to secure 84 hectares of woodland for community usage under a 20 year management agreement had been approved by NRW but had been rejected by the Auditor General. Following further discussions, a new approach had been established in principle, to provide the community with a voice to design a larger landscape in terms of natural regeneration. It was hoped that grant funding would be made available from NRW, with the intention to provide employment and training opportunities for the community to deliver some of the smaller woodland management plans.
- The Head of Energy Project Management informed Members of the Climate Change Working Group, which had been developed to support the practical implementation of the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group. The officer advised that the working group consisted of the relevant officers across all areas of the Council, who would work together to identify, co-ordinate and implement the strategies. The first meeting of the Working Group had been scheduled to take place in the coming weeks and an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group.

- The Head of Energy Project Management provided the Steering Group with an update on the Carbon Footprint Project. Members were informed that the Council had been working with the Carbon Trust to gain insight into the RCT Carbon Footprint and were advised that an initial update of findings would be presented to a future meeting of the Steering Group in order to establish a way forward.

This meeting closed at 3.06 pm

**COUNCILLOR R LEWIS
CHAIR.**