

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 25TH JANUARY, 2021

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 15TH DECEMBER, 2020

“294 DEVELOPING A CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN (REF) –

Cabinet, on 2nd November, 2020 had referred to the report to the Scrutiny Committee for its views on how this work was being progressed.

The report provided an update on the work being undertaken to develop a Climate Change Action Plan as part of the response to the climate emergency declared by Council in July 2019. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation referred to activities undertaken to date and work planned to ensure that the Council had a well-informed and considered response involving partners, the public, staff and Members. The report outlined how the Climate Change Action Plan would be developed, including arrangements for engagement and consultation.

The Committee was informed that progress had been made against a range of actions as detailed in the Annual Delivery Plan and the activities built on work already being taken forward by the Council to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to its impact.

Paragraph 2.6 in the report referred to examples of activities as follows:

- Improvements to street lighting;
- Work undertaken as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme;
- Promotion of Active Travel;
- The roll out of recycling arrangements;
- Improvements to the housing stock;
- Tree and wildflower planting to improve our green infrastructure;
- Supplementary Planning Policies.

To ensure that the Council had a robust Action Plan for tackling climate change it was important that the community and other stakeholders were involved in shaping the Plan and its implementation. Due to the restrictions in place around social distancing and the significant changes in how the Council worked, there needed to be a rethink to its approach.

It was proposed that despite the uncertainty over the coming months that work would continue to engage and consult on the subject of climate change. A key message the Council wanted to give staff and other stakeholders was that no idea was “too small” and no suggestion was “too ambitious” for consideration.

As part of the conversation the Council would also capture information and views gained through more specific projects, for example future consultation on the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan.

The Council's Communications Team would also develop a programme of activity over the next 12 months to enable the public and community groups to continue to inform the work on climate change and shape the Council's response. An outline timetable was contained within the report at paragraph 2.36.

Councillor A. Robertson commented on the level of Carbon Dioxide in the Earth's atmosphere, which he stated was 0.04%. Of that, he stated that the contribution to Carbon Dioxide levels by humans was 0.0016%. The levels of Carbon Dioxide varied over hundreds and thousands of years, so Councillor Robertson challenged the impact of human activities, adding that Methane gas, heavy chemicals and plastics were more damaging to the environment. He stated that he was disappointed that more wasn't being done to tackle these.

Councillor M. Morgan referred to consultation around Active Travel and stated that this seemed to mainly focus on commuters. For rural communities, he asked whether the Council also needed to look at people's leisure activities particularly in relation to the Vale's network of country lanes which should be a pleasant and safe place for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The congestion of cars therefore made it more difficult and dangerous for leisure users using country lanes. Councillor Morgan added that if the country lanes were made safer then more people may be attracted to alternative modes of transport. Councillor Morgan also asked for further consideration of public transport as this could reduce traffic on the roads.

Councillor R. Sivagnanam stated that the consultation should also focus on specific community groups. In reply to this, the Head of Policy and Business Transformation advised that linking to specific groups was something that would be progressed. The aim of the consultation was to allow "open ended responses", so groups could feed in their views and comments. Responses would then be categorised into themes and analysed by the Strategy & Partnership Team. There would be further consultations on specific areas later on. Councillor Sivagnanam also commented on public transport and stated that until travel infrastructure improved there wouldn't be big enough changes. She added that the Action Plan was a good beginning, but more lobbying of Welsh Government for infrastructure improvements was needed.

Councillor G. John outlined that all Council departments needed to look at how they worked, for example, the Planning department needed to give more protection to trees. Councillor John added that all departments needed to consider how they worked to achieve the Council's environmental objectives.

Having fully considered the reference it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the views and comments of the Members of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet, the views of Members being:

- Emphasis should also be placed on other pollutants harmful to the environment, rather than Carbon Dioxide.
- For Active Travel, there should be more focus on leisure users on country lanes by reducing traffic congestion and making the rural road network safer for walkers, cyclists and horse riders.
- Improvements to public transport were needed to reduce traffic congestion.
- Welsh Government should be lobbied for more road/public transport infrastructure improvements.
- Vale of Glamorgan Council departments needed to look at their work practices in order to have greater regard to the Council's environmental objectives.

Reason for Recommendation

In order to feed through the views of the Members of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as part of the consultation process.”