

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 21ST JULY, 2022

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 13TH JULY, 2022

“ PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (DCR) –

The report, as presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, detailed a wide range of activity being undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and took forward Project Zero. This was the Council's response to the climate and nature emergencies declared by the Vale of Glamorgan Council (in conjunction with Welsh Government and others). Such updates would be presented to both this Committee and that of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee three times a year as part of pre-cabinet scrutiny.

Key points raised were:

- The Plan detailed eighteen challenges framed around the need to demonstrate strong leadership (i.e., leading by example as an organisation) fulfil our responsibility to current and future generations (including areas where the Council could help shape the activities of others and through its policies, the way that the Council delivered services and where the Council could influence the actions of others) and to make a difference now (such as the areas that the Council had direct control over how it operated as an organisation, i.e. how it used its buildings).
- The overall aim of Project Zero was decarbonising the Council's activities by 2030 and then contributing to the WG target of a zero carbon Wales by 2050.
- Work had been undertaken with a series of community groups, i.e. in Llantwit Major, Wenvoe and Penarth, around Project Zero and how collectively these ambitions could be achieved within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Work was also underway to ensure that all press releases by the Council included and clearly showed links to Project Zero, as well as having physical signage in areas such as country parks.
- The Council was already in the process of collating data to be submitted to WG regarding the Council's carbon emissions.
- The vast majority of the Council's carbon emissions were within its supply chain, which had led to a review of the Council's procurement strategy, and to identifying opportunities to challenge carbon usage in the various areas of procurement.
- Furthermore, there were to be consultations / reviews on a Green Infrastructure Plan / Strategy and of the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) which would include action towards tackling climate change as well as the use of Section 106 funding to support initiatives that were supportive of this agenda as well. Also of note, was the work through the Cardiff Capital

Region which continued to support work on climate change including the plans for the Aberthaw site in terms of renewable energy and support for developing green skills in the Vale.

- Another key area was around the local production and sourcing of food to help the environment, support the local economy as well as ensuring that Vale residents ate healthily and well, i.e. the Council were part of the Food Vale partnership, which had been awarded the Bronze award status as part of the Sustainable Food Places Network.
- Also, the Council was encouraging active travel and making sure that the infrastructure was in place for the charging of electric vehicles as well as supporting activity that was not associated with the use of the private car.
- The new ten-year Waste Strategy had been reported to Cabinet recently that would be consulted across the Summer, which would encourage more reuse and recycling so that the Council could reduce further the amount of residual waste going into the system.

Following the presentation of the report, the subsequent comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Franks asked for additional information and details concerning the following areas which he felt were only mentioned briefly within the report:
 - The Aberthaw Power Station development. The Director of Corporate Resources explained that he would obtain the additional information required concerning the Aberthaw development, including press releases and on the latest situation in terms of the negotiations around that particular scheme, in the concise format requested.
 - Regarding 'Big Fresh' and what 'locally sourced' actually meant, this did mean purchasing through local suppliers, including both wholesalers and producers. One of the benefits of having Big Fresh, a local authority trading company, was to have that flexibility in terms of the way that those items were procured.
 - OVO Bikes (e-bikes), and rates of use and any instances of abuse of these installations. Regarding the rate of use of OVO bikes, etc. the Director would ask colleagues in the transport service to provide this data.
 - The Council's recent installation of photovoltaic solar panels and its plan for a future programme of works targeting high energy consuming assets. On the solar panels for community centres, etc. the Director of Corporate Resources had spoken recently to the Chief Executive of Glamorgan Voluntary services about this, who were looking at this from both an environmental and inflationary perspective concerning energy use; due to this the Council would be looking at how to have a more sustainable footing for community centres and other community groups as a whole, as a way of potentially alleviating in the medium to long term cost pressures around energy, as well as looking to get additional funding via WG for community centres operated by community groups but owned by the Council in order to see if sustainable alternatives of energy could be installed.
- Councillor Carroll asked about the status of the reserves to support the delivery of Project Zero, for example, had there been any drawdown on these

due to budgetary or other pressures. It was explained that the information would be shared with Committee via finance colleagues, and it was requested that this type of information be included in future reports on Project Zero.

- Councillor Dr Johnson raised the following points:
 - Although it was the intention for the report to be more a summary, it was still important to have a more detailed update which could be accessible, particularly for new Committee Members.
 - It was also important to see what actions had been undertaken so far against objectives too.
 - As raised by Councillor Carrol, greater clarity on the expenditure allocated and spent on the project, to be included within this report, would also be extremely beneficial to enable scrutiny.
 - For future reports, a greater emphasis on the barriers, emerging risks and challenges, as well as the successes or work undertaken around Project Zero and on the progress made addressing these should be include in the update to Committee.
 - Additional details were requested around the Local Nature Partnership / Local Places for Nature and regarding 'blue spaces', including coasts, rivers, etc. within the Vale and any work involving Project Zero with these. The Director of Corporate Resources suggested a presentation on the Local Places for Nature and Local Nature Partnership could be arranged for a future meeting of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and / or an addendum included with the report prior to its referral to that Committee.
 - Also, additional details and reassurance about the time scale for the carbon footprint work that was being undertaken and if these are being met.
 - The use of hyperlinks or other means of access to the relevant background reports and papers linked to Project Zero, as well as the related minutes, in order to track decision-making more easily.
- The Chair echoed Councillor Dr Johnson's points above and the need to refocus this report going forward; Councillor Loveluck-Edwards also felt that the use of a 'RAG' rating that was used by other reports submitted to Scrutiny would be useful for future updates of Project Zero and its performance, timescales, etc. The Director of Corporate Resources added that the additional information required would be included in future reports and for those relevant areas, i.e. financial information, these would be included in an addendum and appendices for when the report was referred on to Cabinet, and the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- Councillor Wood asked the following:
 - Did the Council have enough resources within the Council to achieve the decarbonisation targets by the 2030 deadline. It was explained that although the associated plan, etc. around Project Zero was ambitious and aspirational, it was backed up by a realistic assessment on how and what resources the Council would need to deliver this, including investment in the Council's Energy Service to assess and interpret the carbon emissions data more effectively and to drive wider community information and engagement work to help achieve the project's goals. The project was also being looked at and delivered from a corporate level by multiple teams and services.

- How much benchmarking was done against other Councils around carbon emissions / decarbonisation measures and performance, in order for the Council to take a fully constructive, 'strategic' approach. It was explained that in terms of the carbon emissions data return that was submitted to WG, there was a cross public sector working group that looked at this data, which was broken down to the local authority level as well in order that the Vale and other authorities could compare themselves against their peers. The Council and others used this data to learn and share 'best practice' with each other as well.
- On where the Councillor could find the catalogue of working practices or plans that helped to meet Project Zero's aspirations, it was explained that these were covered in the Climate Challenge Plan and the Council's Service Plans.

Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress detailed in the report in relation to a number of the challenges within the Climate Change Challenge Plan be noted.

(2) T H A T Cabinet be informed of the comments made by Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the Project Zero Update Report, namely:

- Additional information be provided on the following areas covered by the report:
 - Aberthaw Power Station.
 - OVOBikes (e-bikes).
 - On the status of the reserves to support the delivery of Project Zero (i.e. has there been any drawdown on these, etc.).
 - On the engagement with, and the work of, the Local Nature Partnership in relation to Project Zero.
 - On any work to be undertaken around 'blue spaces' (i.e. rivers, coasts and streams);

and, where relevant, the above information be included as an addendum or appendix prior to the report being referred onto Cabinet, and the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as well as for future reports for the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

- Future reports include the following in terms of its focus and format:
 - The use of hyperlinks or other means of access to the relevant background reports and papers linked to Project Zero, as well as the related minutes, in order to track decision-making more easily.
 - A greater emphasis on the barriers, emerging risks and challenges, as well as the successes or work undertaken, around Project Zero and on the progress made addressing these.

- To update on the timescales around decarbonisation and whether these are being met, as well as utilising 'RAG' ratings (Red, Amber and Green) for the various elements of the Project.
- To provide more detail on the financial aspects of this Project, i.e. an update on the finances and reserves that support the delivery of Project Zero.

(3) T H A T following consideration of the report by Cabinet that they refer the report to Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to consider with the comments of both the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and refer any further comments back to Cabinet.

(4) T H A T Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that this report be distributed to all elected Members, the Public Services Board and all Town and Community Councils for their information.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(2) In order for Cabinet to consider the comments and views of the Scrutiny Committee.

(3) To enable the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to consider the report and the comments of both the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

(4) To update all elected Members and other stakeholders on the arrangements in place to deliver Project Zero."

Attached as Appendix – Report to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee: 13th July, 2022