

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 17th January, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor S.D. Perkes (Chair); Councillor J. Aviet (Vice-Chair); Councillors C.E.A. Champion, P. Drake, A.M. Ernest, M.J. Hooper, E. Penn, I.A.N. Perry and S.T. Wiliam.

Also present: Councillors B. Brooks (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places), L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), W.A. Hennessy, Dr. I.J. Johnson, M. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

608 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

609 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors V.P. Driscoll and C. Iannucci.

610 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 15th November and 13th December, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

611 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

612 AUDIT WALES: VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ASSURANCE AND RISK ASSESSMENT (ARA) REVIEW 2021/22 AND THE AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES NATIONAL STUDY REPORT ON PUBLIC SECTOR CARBON READINESS FOR NET ZERO BY 2030 (REF) –

The reference from Governance and Audit Committee of 12th December, 2022 and contained within the agenda was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources.

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It related to the Council's Annual Assurance and Risk Assessment Report, which was produced by Audit Wales, and was presented to the Committee specifically in relation to a request to consider the Council's response to the recommendations.

In line with a commitment to carry out a long-term programme of work on climate change, the Auditor General for Wales in July 2022 published a report on Public Sector Carbon Readiness for Net Zero by 2030, which was attached at Appendix B to the report. That review produced one recommendation for the Council to consider:

- R1: In order to meet its net zero ambition the Council needed to fully cost its action plan and ensure that it was aligned with its Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Director outlined that the proposed response was that the Project Zero Programme Board had reviewed the report from Audit Wales and its findings and had considered the costs of delivering each individual scheme. That was in addition to developing data insight that was needed to help understand the overall costs throughout the life of the plan, and that work was underway.

Councillor M. Hooper commented that there was an uncertainty to the Council's ability to reach net zero by 2030 and he referred to the Council needing to be more ambitious. In reply, the Director stated that the Project Zero report to be considered later on in the Agenda, made reference to the Council's carbon emissions and broke those down over the three scopes of activity. The Council had direct control of those three scopes of activities, but it was more difficult to affect change in activities later in the supply chain, which accounted for almost 90% of the Council's emissions. A mechanism for measuring carbon emissions was first devised in 2019/20 but had since been refined by Welsh Government. That meant that it was more difficult to make direct comparisons of the Council's operations and therefore the impact on Carbon reduction. The Director stated that it would be useful to be able to compare year on year to see the impact of the Council's actions under Project Zero. It was important to consider that the data for 2019/20 was also impacted partly by Covid, but the Council was starting to see patterns of activity change. It was also therefore important to understand the impact that those changes had on meeting the Council's 2030 target for net zero and in relation to the overall 2050 net zero target for Wales, which was why understanding the overall emissions of the whole Vale of Glamorgan area was equally as important. The Council had therefore commissioned some external work to understand the different sectors and their impact across the Vale of Glamorgan, which would assist the Council to work as a community leader in terms of affecting behavioural change outside of the organisation.

With regard to the external work commissioned by the Council, the Director advised that a draft of that report had been received, but some further work and refinement had been requested. It was anticipated for the final report to be presented alongside the next Project Zero update.

Subsequently, it was

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RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

613 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 15th December, 2022 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager, Regeneration.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was part of the UK Government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK. It is a mix of revenue and capital funding. The overarching aim of the fund was to build pride in place and increase life chances. Underneath this aim there were three investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills.

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the Local Investment Plan. An overview of the Local Investment Plan for the Vale of Glamorgan local authority area was attached at Appendix 1.

It was noted that the funding profile (referred to paragraph 5.1 of the report) for the Vale of Glamorgan and all Councils was challenging, particularly for 2022/23. Cabinet had therefore resolved to delegate specified powers to named officers in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder relating to the allocation of funding.

Councillor M. Hooper asked for the implications if the money was not spent in time, referring specifically to the project to develop a new Marina in Barry. In reply, the Operational Manager advised that the Council had applied for a grant of £20 million for a new Marina and community Water Sport Centre in on the waterfront in Barry. It was recognised that some slippage could be justified under the Levelling Up Fund, but the same flexibility had not been provided for the Shared Prosperity Fund. The Council had put out a call to businesses and community groups to shape how the Fund could be spent. One of the key factors in the decision-making process would inevitably be the deliverability of projects. The Committee was advised that the funding allocation increased over the next two years, with approximately £14.1 million to be spent by the end 31st March, 2023, which if not spent in annual profiles would be lost.

Councillor E. Penn queried whether there was a gap between the funding previously from the E.U. to that now given by the U.K. Government. In reply, the Operational Manager confirmed that at an all-Wales level funding was significantly less, but that information was not available at a local level. The Council had seen some substantial programmes, such as the long running Rural Development Programme, disappear following the loss of E.U. money. Any funding was welcomed but it needed to be recognised that it would have to be more targeted. Inevitably some communities and business sectors would be worse off.

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With regard to improving employability and support for those economically inactive, the Operational Manager advised that there was a Regional Project aimed at upskilling people by supporting numeracy and literacy. This was similar to an existing European Social Fund project, for which he would provide further information to Members at a later date. At a local level, there was also a smaller sum of money available for skills yet to be allocated.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the funding provided be welcomed.

Reason for recommendation

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

614 PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (CX) –

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the report which detailed a wide range of activity being undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and to take forward Project Zero. Progress included work around communications, electric vehicles, a new Green Infrastructure Plan, waste management and schools.

The report also detailed some of the key data regarding the Council's carbon emissions as reported to Welsh Government in October 2022. The report provided Members with an update regarding the finances associated with Project Zero and the approach the Board was taking with regards to the allocation of funds.

The report also updated on the approach to programme management and progress reporting for Project Zero. The Director highlighted that Appendix A provided the latest progress report itself, which aimed to address both the 2030 internal target for net zero and also the 2050 target for Wales and was structured around the three areas of the challenge plan.

Councillor M. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services), with permission to speak, stated that Project Zero was very much one of the key focusses for the Council as climate change was one of the big challenges that we were facing. One of the things that he was very keen on delivering across the Vale was electrical charging points, with some recently installed in Penarth, Barry and the Western Vale. However, the Council needed more places for the points to be installed and that was a challenge, so he would be grateful if Members had any suggestions for appropriate locations. The Cabinet Member then referred to changing behaviours, and he stated that as roads were part of his Cabinet portfolio, the Council needed to do more promotion around active travel to encourage people to walk and cycle.

Councillor E. Penn referred to electric vehicle charging, and the number of terraced houses in Barry and Penarth, so finding a solution to on street charging would be really beneficial. Councillor Penn added that there was a big challenge in

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encouraging people to cycle more, and he queried progress on the active travel scheme proposed for between Barry and Dinas Powys. Councillor Penn's final query was whether trees cut down due to ash die back would be replaced by the same species. In response, the Director stated that with regard to charging points, colleagues in Neighbourhood Services and Transport were working as part of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, with some proposals being developed for a range of different possible approaches that could be adopted. Further information on how the proposals could operate would be provided, and some of that related to the understanding of the geography and layout of different areas including Barry and Penarth. Information relating to the active travel proposals for Dinas Powys and the species of replacement trees would be sought and reported to Members via email.

Councillor M. Hooper referred to the uncertainty of meeting the 2030 target as raised in the Audit Wales report, and he stated that the Plan should be more ambitious, citing examples such as the importance of replacing urban trees cut down; the linkages between economic growth and climate change; and more reference needed around the impact of flooding. About electric vehicle charging points, Councillor Hooper stated that we should be driving less and not just driving around in electric vehicles, so there needed to be a more focus there on leadership. There were also commercial operators with charging points which were not serviced often enough and could therefore be non-operational for considerable periods, so Councillor Hooper queried whether there was a role for the Council to assist. In reply, the Director stated that information relating to the decisions as to how trees were replaced would be sought with colleagues. In terms of the link between economic growth and climate change, the Council had looked to strengthen some of the commitments within the Annual Delivery Plan for the next year. Specific areas of activity were underway to create an investment and growth plan for the Vale and there was also the master plan for Barry, which also referred to some of that development. Linkages between those decisions and the green infrastructure plan were also being considered and the comments would be relayed to Director of Place. With regard to flooding updates, the Director stated further information would be sent via email.

Councillor I. Perry concurred with the views of Councillor Hooper, stating that electric vehicles were not the solution as there were environmental impacts from sourcing materials for renewables. Therefore, greater ambition was required, and the Council needed to think more about changing lifestyles. Councillor Perry commented on his frustration with mature trees being removed and the need to make bigger changes and doing things differently.

As part of the update and following a request by the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, a presentation on the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) was provided by the Local Nature Partnership Co-ordinator. The presentation covered the following areas:

- Background on the creation of Local Nature Partnerships;
- Composition and aims of the Vale's LNP;
- Funding allocation from Welsh Government. Focus being on urban and peri-urban areas of deprivation. The 2022-23 funding allocation from Welsh Government, which included £62.4k for revenue and £169k for capital

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schemes included habitat creation and restoration, training for volunteers and tools/machinery for habitat management;

- Breakdown of grants awarded to community groups and projects for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. 32 individual awards over the three years;
- Work undertaken to manage grasslands such as the pilot verges on the A48 and Fonmon bypass;
- Summary of the Nature Recovery Action Plan;
- Next steps for the LNP.

Councillor C. Champion stated that funding on an annual basis was not ideal, and he queried whether Welsh Government had indicated that future funding would be allocated on a longer-term basis. The Committee was advised that no indication had been received from Welsh Government. Councillor Champion stated that it would be useful for LNP Officers from the Vale and neighbouring authorities to make contact to consider making representations in relation the funding issues on a joint basis to Welsh Government.

Councillor M. Hooper echoed the views of Councillor Champion regarding funding and stated that some kind of lobbying campaign should be made to Welsh Government. Councillor Hooper also raised that there were community projects ongoing, such as the Harbour Road community orchard, that LNP officers may not be aware of but would be supportive. Councillor Hooper commented that the Council needed to go against conventional thinking on where things were located, referring to the need for extra car parking spaces on Barry Island. What was needed however, was more consideration of how the Council changed people's behaviours, for example, by stating that the car was less important than other modes of transport.

Councillor I. Perry referred to the pilot project relating to the grass verges along the A48. Councillor Perry stated that there may be some opportunity to engage with the local Community Council to assist. There may also be other opportunities to work with all Town or Community Councils across the Vale. Councillor Perry also referred to Planning decisions made by the Council which he considered would lead to habitats being lost in his Ward.

Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson, not a member of the Committee but with permission to speak, stated that he had requested for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the work of the LNP. Councillor Dr. Johnson stated that he echoed the comments of Councillor Perry and working with Town and Community Councils as a delivery partner. He appreciated the idea of nature on the doorstep, but the urban and peri urban nature of the projects maybe meant that some areas of the Vale would be left out. He was pleased to see the long-term nature of the Plan, but he shared the concern with funding from Welsh Government being allocated an annual basis. That made the planning of long-term work more difficult. Councillor Dr. Johnson, therefore suggested that there was worth with either the Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet writing to Welsh Government, noting concerns surrounding the funding model and asking for multi-year funding to be implemented for the programme.

The Chair, Councillor S. Perkes referred to other community projects ongoing within Wards in Barry but noted that such schemes would be welcomed everywhere.

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Councillor Champion stated that he agreed with Councillor Dr. Johnson regarding writing to Welsh Government, and he made a formal recommendation to the Committee, which was seconded by Councillor A. Ernest. The Leader, Councillor L. Burnett, with permission to speak, stated that the issue of short-term funding was a topic of regular discussion with Welsh Government, so raising it again would not be something new. What needed to be addressed was the delays with budget notification from central government. Following a vote by the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Champion's recommendation was not carried.

Subsequently, the Committee

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress detailed in the report in relation to the challenges within the Climate Change Challenge Plan be noted.
- (2) T H A T the recommendation that the overall progress be reported twice a year be approved. This will be in addition to progress reported as part of the quarterly performance monitoring reports and specific topic related reports, for example on the Green Infrastructure Plan or transport issues.
- (3) T H A T the funding available in reserves and the arrangements proposed to approve the use of reserves to progress future schemes be noted.
- (4) T H A T the information provided with regards to the Council's carbon emissions as reported to Welsh Government in the Autumn 2022 be noted.
- (5) T H A T the report and any comments of the Committee be referred to Cabinet to be considered alongside the comments of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- (6) T H A T it be recommended to Cabinet that this report be distributed to all elected Members, members of 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) To enable meaningful and timely progress reporting.
- (3) To ensure that Members are aware of the available funding and the arrangements for allocation and approval of schemes to progress Project Zero.
- (4) To ensure that Members are aware of the latest information reported to Welsh Government with regards to the Council's carbon emissions.

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(5) To enable Cabinet to consider the comments of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as part of its consideration of progress in delivering the Climate Challenge Plan.

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