

Minutes



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Date: 29 October 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Present: Councillors L Lacey (Chair), P Hourahine, Y Forsey, M Evans, C Evans and Hussain

Paul Jones (Strategic Director - Environment and Sustainability), Emma Wakeham (Senior Policy & Partnership Officer), Connor Hall (Scrutiny Adviser) and Samantha Schanzer

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors M Al-Nuaimi and C Ferris

1 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

A committee member noted that there was an attendee listed who was not in attendance and that the recommendation resulting from the vote was not properly noted.

With these changes, the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 were **accepted** as a true and accurate record

3 **Climate Change Strategy**

The Head of City Services introduced the report and a presentation. The Head of City Services noted that it is a draft report for consultation. The Head of City Services highlighted that it was the Council's strategy, and a Newport-wide strategy would be developed at a later date. The Head of City Services recognised the key influencing role that the Council have and acknowledged that plans were becoming firmer as the goal deadline was relatively near.

The Carbon Reduction Manager noted that annual total carbon emissions in the last four years had reduced due to a carbon management plan. The Carbon Reduction Manager noted that Covid had an anomalous reaction but hoped that the progress would continue. The Carbon Reduction Manager presented an overview of projects underway including the widespread roll out of solar PV, electric charging stations, the replacement of fleet vehicles including refuse lorries, cars and light vans which would all be transitioned to electric by 2022. Additionally, the Carbon Reduction Manager highlighted engagement activities with local school children, as well as replacing older lighting notably in the Velodrome to be more efficient LED lights, and noted that

the Council have signed up to the Gwent Healthy Travel Charter launched in 2020 and had approved 2 low carbon housing plans.

The Carbon Reduction Manager highlighted that the climate strategy's key difference was having to account for all of the organisation's carbon emissions and that the team would be taking a broader view in new report with the key focus being the effect of procurement.

The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer highlighted that progress had been made but there was still much to do as a Council. The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer informed committee that they'd planning around six themes, based around Welsh Government guidance.

Committee Members asked-

- Whether there would be a contractual expectation that suppliers could reach Net Zero and how the Council could enforce it?

The Head of City Services said that work was already taking place in this area, and noted the challenge in terms of technology and cost regarding building and vehicle emissions. The Senior Policy and Partnership Officer assured committee that new framework assessed new contracts for procurement that would address issues such as social values and carbon emissions. The Carbon Reduction Manager highlighted that new Welsh Government guidelines needed refinement, and assured Committee that this was a problem for the whole public sector in Wales which could lead to larger common supply chains between councils.

- Would there be a framework put together for those who needed it?

The Carbon Reduction Manager confirmed there would, and that it would also support to assess the carbon impact and resource, which would have to be developed internally.

- Would the Mayor's car be replaced with a fully electric vehicle, and when?

The Head of City Services noted that the Mayor's car was hybrid, but that all in the fleet should be electric by the end of the year. It was highlighted as important that the electric fleet is branded as such to provide an example to others and encourage adoption of electric vehicles.

A committee member commented that the Mayor's car should only be changed when it needed changing, not for PR as that put aside the point of environmental betterment.

- Were there plans to roll out further electric charging points, specifically superfast charging points?

The Head of City Services highlighted there was a mix of "slower" chargers in long-stay parking areas, but assured committee that they were rolling out more "superfast" charging points with programme funding. The Head of City Services acknowledged that there was challenge in finding places where the infrastructure would support this.

- Had the presenting officers had time to read the Welsh Government report released one day before the meeting, and time to compare and contrast with Newport's Climate Change report?

The Head of City Services noted that it would be unlikely to find any surprises in the Welsh Government report and that the final strategy would review this, but noted it would unlikely that the Newport Climate Change Strategy and Welsh Government Report would completely align as both were ever-evolving.

- Would future reports be supported with a technical document to address how changes would be measured?

The Head of City Services agreed that a further document may be needed but it would inform other Council plans. The Head of City Services highlighted that they were only beginning the journey and detail would have to follow.

- Would the Council consider a Carbon offsetting programme?

The Carbon Reduction Manager highlighted that only a small area is Council owned land where trees are, and there was only small opportunity to plant trees to capture carbon within that limitation. The Carbon Reduction Manager highlighted the importance of the Council's work with partners and groups to increase this but noted that the offsetting was further down in the hierarchy of Carbon reduction and the Council should only use offsetting to remove the small remainder that cannot be removed.

- Would planning rules be adjusted to compensate for the need for heat pumps in new builds, or flats being built in bike racks or integrated recycling?

The Head of City Services noted the challenge planning can be with the constraints on its operation but reassured committee that they have been lobbying Welsh Government. The Head of City Services acknowledged that there can be issues whereby planning permission giving previously does not reflect requirements of the current time.

- Would the consultation earmark certain groups within Newport, to ensure particular interest groups such as the Youth Climate Ambassadors were represented?
- Would the consultation seek to educate the residents, workers and Councillors of Newport on environmental issues?

The Head of City Services informed committee that a lot of groups had been earmarked for consultation already, and that the suggestion would be taken on board. The Head of City Services agreed with committee that this was a partnership effort and explained that the reason targets were frontloaded to the public sector was to change public mood, acknowledging the purchasing power of Council in the wider scope of the city and its residents. The Head of City Services assured committee that some projects are already done in partnership and agreed that the model of an environmental sustainability board was interesting and something to look at. The Head of City Services reminded committee that the agenda was moving rapidly and the team dealing with these issues was small, though that was hoped to change when the restructure takes effect. The Head of City Services agreed that there was still public resistance but felt that the mood was shifting.

- How were indirect emissions quantified?

The Carbon Reduction Manager explained that scope 1 focused on direct fuels used in buildings and transport, scope 2 on indirect usage such as electricity usage, and scope 3 focused on the fully indirect emissions such as procurement and staff commuting.

- What was the proposed cost of the strategy?

The Head of City Services noted that costs were not included as the matters at hand were rapidly evolving and it was challenging to realistically cost the Strategy.

- Was the staff pension fund ethically funded?

The Head of City Services informed committee that Newport City Council didn't control the pension fund and its investments, but agreed that it needed addressing and highlighted the Leader's concerns regarding its ethical status.

- Were there any clashes between this report and the Welsh Government report?

The Head of City Services reminded committee that they have been involved in Welsh Government's report but not seen a final draft. The Head of City Services informed committee that it would take a few days to scrutinise Welsh Government's report, which would be reflected as best as possible. The Head of City Services assured committee that annual reports would allow reflections and changes to be made if necessary and that any report major changes would be reported to Scrutiny.

- What would be done to encourage responses to the consultation?

The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer highlighted the focus on young people and the plans to speak to these groups and engage through schools. The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer informed committee that the normal ways of consultation such as online surveys and partners' engagement, as well as through PSB networks and local businesses. The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer informed committee that consultation would begin once translation was complete.

The Senior Policy & Partnership Officer highlighted plans for animations to be created and distributed on social media.

4 **Conclusion of Committee Reports**

The committee agreed that they were content with the report as it was, with the main concern being the consultation and responses, but admitted this seemed to be well planned.

A committee member questioned whether they would be able to translate the consultation into other languages with the suggestion of video as a medium to be more inclusive of the BAME communities.

- The committee suggested Newport's two other largest spoken languages be considered.

5 **Scrutiny Adviser Reports**

6 Scrutiny Adviser Reports (Pages 75 - 82)

a) Forward Work Programme Update (Appendix 1)

The Scrutiny Adviser confirmed the next meeting to be Friday 10th December where Welsh Language Strategy would be presented.

The Scrutiny Adviser noted that due to committee being displeased with the previous consultation, a recommendation had been sent to Policy and Partnerships as they had partial control of budget to better address the issue.

The meeting terminated at 11.33 am