



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel - Climate Change and Nature**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Wednesday, 9 November 2022 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor H Lawson (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C M J Evans
B J Rowlands
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
M H Jones
M W Locke

Councillor(s)

J A Hale
S E Keeton
H M Morris

Other Attendees

David Hopkins
Andrea Lewis
Hamish Osborn
Sarah Bennett

Cabinet Member – Corporate Service and Performance
Cabinet Member – Service Transformation
Natural Resources Wales
Natural Resources Wales

Officer(s)

Geoff Bacon
Deb Hill
Liz Jordan
Rachel Lewis
Paula Livingstone

Paul Meller
Carol Morgan
Tom Price

Head of Property Services
Nature Conservation Team Leader
Scrutiny Officer
Directorate Project Manager
Divisional EHO, Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing
Natural Environment Manager
Interim Head of Housing & Public Health
Team Leader - Pollution Control

Apologies for Absence

Other Attendees: Cllr Andrew Stevens

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were made.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

The Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting on 15 March 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters Arising:

Minute 78 – On Action 2, Panel queried if the Councillor training had been set up. Informed online e-learning training programme had been developed and would go live after report goes to Cabinet in December 2022.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Role of the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel

Members discussed the role of the Panel.

6 Water Quality and Water Management

David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance, relevant officers and representatives of Natural Resources Wales attended to brief the Panel and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel queried if there had been any major incidents locally with sewerage getting into the sea after storms. Informed by NRW there are storm overflows around the coast and near rivers designed to spill excess water, which gets into the sewerage system during heavy rainfall, into the environment to stop homes getting flooded. There are storm overflows in Swansea. On our most valuable stretches of coast, overflows only spill in extreme conditions.
- Panel queried who is responsible for sewerage discharge into the sea. Informed NRW responsible for discharges into controlled waters ie rivers, most lakes and sea. NRW works with Council on public health impacts of some of the discharges, but NRW has primary responsibility for responding to pollution incidents. Welsh Water have a responsibility to stay within permit limits and will be informed if any issues relating to their assets and NRW will follow up enforcement of this if needed.
- Panel queried how effectively agricultural pesticide runoff is monitored in Swansea. Heard from NRW that main problem due to agriculture throughout Wales is runoff with regard to slurry and nutrients. Agriculture is not biggest issue in Swansea regarding water quality but it is monitored and if necessary followed up.
- Panel queried if Caswell is one of the trouble sites with regards to discharge into the sea, how many trouble sites we have and how we compare to similar authorities. Heard from NRW there are emergency overflows rather than storm overflows at both Caswell and Llangland. There have been some problems with flooding in the system particularly at Caswell which has led to overflow alerts being triggered in the past. Volumes discharged at both beaches are very small.
- Panel wanted to know if infrastructure improvements are planned or needed in the area. Informed by NRW they would always be looking for infrastructure

in Swansea to be investigated and improved if need be. It is the emergency discharges they want to ensure only function as emergency discharges and not storm discharges.

- Panel queried how we are going to future proof the sewerage/drainage system. Heard from NRW likely to get more intense storms in future which will put pressure on any drainage system. Welsh Water are taking this into account in their forward planning.
- Panel asked NRW's views on septic tanks in urban areas. Heard NRW would rather not see them in urban areas, would rather they be connected to main drains.
- Panel queried the involvement NRW has with building sites regarding silt. Informed that building sites should not result in silt pollution in rivers. NRW needs to work better in future with planning and developers. They would like to see much better phasing of building sites and developers working in a cleaner way.
- Panel mentioned that SUDS regulations are now in place and asked if this helped at all. NRW felt it is a significant step forward but there are limits to what any legislation can do. NRW want to get better at preventing pollution from building activities.
- Panel asked about private drinking water supplies and how often risk assessments and monitoring is carried out. Heard that for private drinking supplies, there is an annual check from the Council if it is a commercial or shared supply and a 5-yearly check if it is a single supply. Officers confident they are on top of this and everything within the area is captured.

7 Overview of Climate Change and Nature in Swansea

Cabinet Members Andrea Lewis and David Hopkins together with relevant officers attended to brief the Panel and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel asked about mini hydro power across Swansea and wanted to know if the Department had done an audit of potential sites across Swansea, if the Council could potentially take advantage of these stations and if there is anywhere we can put them. Panel informed the Council is working with neighbouring authorities on development of regional energy development plan. Heard it deals with how we can 'green the grid', more towards 2050 target than 2030 target but the Authority, funded by Welsh Government, will be generating a local energy development plan, feeding into the wider region. Officers will give an update at the Panel meeting in January 2023 when they have more idea of timescales.
- Panel aware it will be extremely difficult to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and queried if confident the Council will even achieve it. Officers confirmed it will be incredibly difficult and the Council is being led and advised by Welsh Government as it is a whole Wales approach.
- Panel queried what is meant by 'Fairer Parking', mentioned on page 36 of the report. Officers will provide response following the meeting.

Actions:

- Update on Local Energy Plan to be included in 'Climate Change Update' item at next Panel meeting in January 2023.
- Panel to be informed what is meant by 'Fairer Parking'.

8 Draft Work Programme 2022-23

The Panel agreed the Work Programme for 2022-23.

The meeting ended at 11.00 am