



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel - Natural Environment**

Remotely via MS Teams

Tuesday, 29 June 2021 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor P K Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
M H Jones
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)
S J Gallagher
H Lawson
M Sherwood

Councillor(s)
O G James
I E Mann
W G Thomas

Other Attendees

Mark Thomas	Cabinet Member – Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management
Mark Wade	Head of Housing and Public Health
Tom Price	Team Leader, Pollution Control
Victoria Seller	Research Officer, Swansea University
Emily-Jayne Davies	Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): H M Morris, C Richards and L J Tyler-Lloyd

46 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

47 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

48 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

The minutes of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting, held on 19 May 2021, were agreed as an accurate record.

49 Public Questions

There were two public questions, focused on (a) domestic wood burning and (b) use of national air quality data to inform Council strategy.

The Panel discussed question (a) in the context of Air Pollution and the monitoring of same. Cllr Mark Thomas outlined the Council's approach and highlighted that a city-wide approach to monitoring/enforcement is not achievable at present, however, the Council is making continuous improvements to Air Quality standards and policies, in line with Government guidelines. Officers confirmed that under statutory nuisance provisions, the Council has powers to respond to complaints regarding smoke control, and will do so if a complaint is received.

Cllr Mark Thomas acknowledged question (b) as a wider policy issue, both locally and nationally, and undertook to provide a full written answer in due course.

50 Air Quality Management

The Panel held a discussion on the Council's current *Air Quality Management* strategies. The Panel heard from lead Cabinet Members and relevant officers on the policies and plans currently in place.

Panel Members raised questions regarding the report presented, interested to know more about the technology and available resources supporting the work of the Council's Pollution control Team, such as the PM_{2.5} analyser on Fabian Way. The Panel also heard about the Green Screen which has been installed on Fabian way, and the work of the Council looking at results, both during and after lockdown, helping to identify and measure benefits to mitigate some exposure to engine pollution.

Discussion focussed on:

- Clean Air Advisory Panel has been set up with Welsh Government, to advise on matters arising from air quality.
- Scope to engage schools / pupils in green infrastructure projects – need for engagement of children at a young age, shifting traditional behaviours.
- Transboundary effects – some increased pollutants during lockdown in the wider context.
- Traffic counter / traffic flow data: Capability exists to look into specific days/events and the effect of higher density traffic on the data. Swansea University plan to research major events in Swansea, and any subsequent impact on air quality.
- Engine idling – for example, school collections. Matter of concern that children are subject to concentrated exposure during these times. Buses should not be running too long with idle engines. The Panel heard that buses under contract with the Council have a limited idling period, anything beyond that should be reported. Councillors acknowledged that it is difficult to monitor/enforce cars at pick up times outside schools. Panel Members suggested bus operators are encouraged to install monitoring technology to measure engine idling times.
- Education – exists a need to better inform public to a greater extent as to consequences of certain behaviours.
- Councillors acknowledged the increased workload and strains put on the team during the period of the pandemic response.

The Panel also received a presentation from Victoria Seller, of Swansea University, covering an overview of Air Quality strategies in Wales. Discussion focused on:

- RCPCH Report (2016) estimated 40,000 early deaths each year attributed to air quality in the UK.
- Air quality has been linked to a huge range of health issues, including nanoparticles crossing the blood/brain barrier.
- Guidelines and standards may not be protecting the health of everybody in society.
- Nitrogen Dioxide gas is traffic related, occurring locally in discrete pockets.
- Air pollution is linked to health and deprivation, disproportionately affecting some communities.
- Air Qualities Guidelines (WHO) are due to be updated imminently.
- The Well-Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 places responsibility on public bodies to work in a cohesive way to manage Air Pollution.
- Automatic Urban and Rural network (AURN) – 11 sites across Wales, 2 in rural areas, not a good spread of monitor density due to cost of monitors and time intensive operation. These monitors, plus data predictions, demonstrate issues with Nitrogen Dioxide.
- 40 automated monitors across Wales, in addition to 11 AURNs.
- 12 Authorities have diffusion tubes, small simple technology, measuring long term concentration of Nitrogen Dioxide.
- The University is to undertake a new piece of work / research surrounding the impact of reduced traffic, during lockdown, on air quality. The Hypothesis is that the reduction in traffic will correlate with a reduction in NO₂ and PM_{2.5}.

The Panel also took the opportunity to ask about the policies relating to the Local Development Plan / increased house building, and the subsequent increase on traffic/air pollution. Cllr Thomas highlighted a clear defined need for more housing nationally, acknowledging the balance needed between housing demands and impacts upon surrounding services.

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the way forward. The Chair thanked all for their input.

AGREED that the Panel write to the Cabinet Members with its views and recommendations.

51 Letters

The Panel received the correspondence sent following the meeting of the Panel held on 19 May 2021.

The meeting ended at 11.55 am