



Report of the Director of Place / Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Service Transformation

Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Policy Development Committee

16 December 2021

Climate Change and Nature Strategy

Purpose: This report highlights the recently approved Cabinet report on the Climate Change and Nature Strategy (18th November 2021) which took into account the recent declaration of a Nature Emergency on 4th November 2021. To aid forward planning, it also informs the Committee on the current status of each policy area included within the governance structure.

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For Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Since the last update presented to the PDC in December 2019 there has been lots of positive activity within the Climate Change and Nature areas, both internally within the council, regionally and nationally. Most importantly a second update report and new Strategy were approved by Cabinet on 18th November. This report provides an overview of progress and will help the committee to determine which related policies to bring forward in the coming year.
- 1.2 Swansea Council declared a Nature Emergency on 4th November 2021, and this has since been reflected in the governance changes below. Further work will be required by the Nature Conservation team to develop a Nature Recovery Action Plan.

2. Governance Update

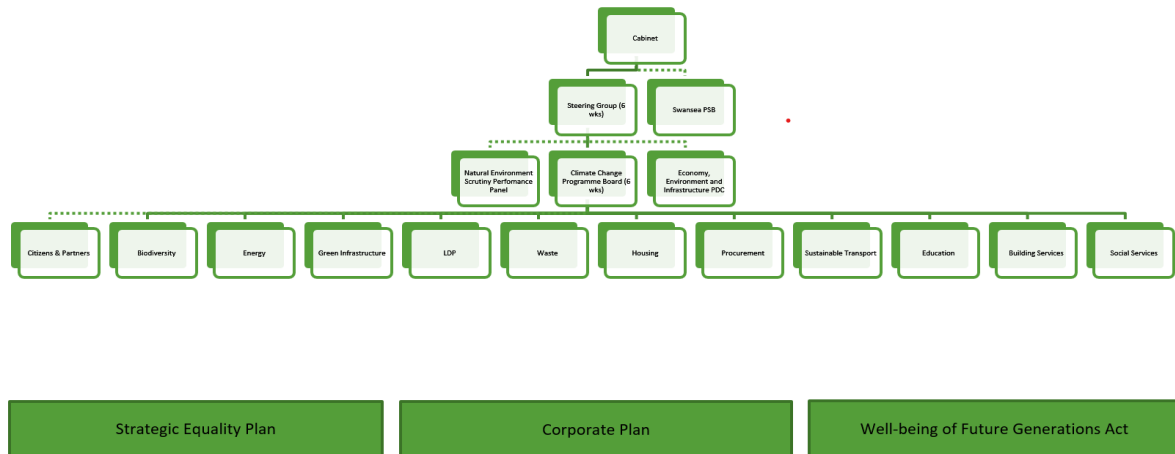
2.1 Governance has been formalised both internally and externally with partners, including PSB (Public Service Boards) and regular programme boards and steering group meetings have ensured good progress throughout 2020-21.

The Programme Board now reflects a council wide involvement with the addition of Education, Resources and Social Services colleagues, plus a change in name of both the board and strategy to reflect the importance of Nature Recovery too.

Also, Swansea Environment Forum, whilst still under contract to Swansea Council (March 22), will lead the main external partner forum for the remainder of this financial year. The tender process will begin for a future partner in the New Year.

As part of the regional agenda the 4 local authorities have progressed a new draft regional energy strategy due to be approved by cabinet in December. Further work is also progressing as part of the new CJC work programme also due to be reported to cabinet in December.

Fig 1. Swansea Council Governance



2.2 The Council's Well-being and Strategic Equality Objectives set out within the Corporate Plan and Strategic Equality Plan establish the Council's overall strategic framework for maximising its contribution to a more resilient and a more equal Wales.

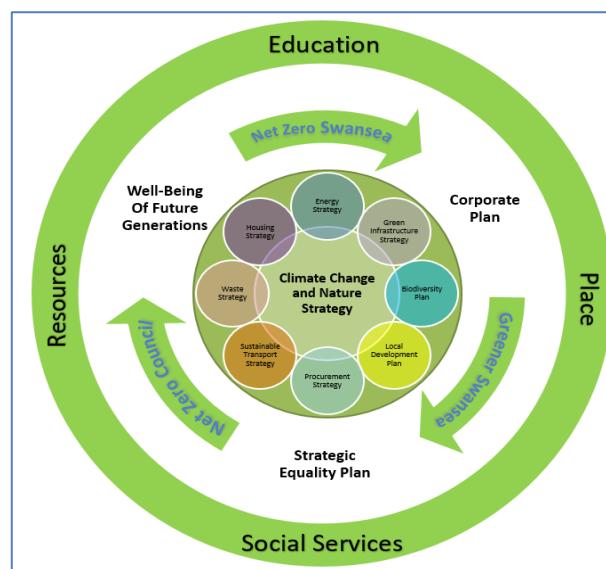
The plans are aligned and contain steps to tackle climate change and nature recovery and, through that work, address and improve equality.

In light of the recent ‘Nature Emergency’ announced by Swansea Council on 4th November 2021, the overall programme has transformed from ‘Climate Change’ to ‘Climate Change and Nature Recovery, i

The intention is to cascade this down through all future activities and also in the proposal to amend the corporate well-being objective within the 2022/27 Corporate Plan and any subsequent changes necessary to the **Strategic Equality Plan** so as to maximise our contribution to a more environmentally resilient and a more equal Wales.

To ensure that in addition to achieving **Net Zero 2030 for Swansea Council**, we will continue to work with partners, organisations, schools, businesses to support **Swansea** as a whole county and citizens in its efforts to become **Net Zero by 2050**, aligning with the **Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget (2) 2022-2025**. Establishing both Climate and Nature Charters and a Pledge Wall to encourage active participation and help build a healthier, more prosperous and greener Swansea.

Fig 2. New Strategic Approach



3. Strategy and Policy Update

3.1 The new **Climate Change and Nature Strategy** document is attached as **Appendix 1**. This will remain under continual review in light of Swansea’s recent Welsh Government emissions submission and the recent Nature Emergency declaration on Nov 4th 2021. It is recommended that approval for any subsequent changes would be delegated to the Steering Group Chair – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Service Transformation, along with the Director of Place. The intention is to expand this to include a wider range of actions relating to delivering nature recovery and ecosystem resilience.

3.2 **Biodiversity Plan/Section 6/Nature Recovery Action Plan**

As required under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Biodiversity Duty, in December 2020 the Council submitted its first 3 year report outlining actions it had taken to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. Having appointed a new Biodiversity Officer in June 2021 we are in the process of consulting with all services across the council to develop a Section 6 Biodiversity Plan for the period 2021-2023.

In collaboration with members of the Local Nature Partnership, we are currently reviewing and updating the Local Biodiversity Action Plan to produce a Nature Recovery Action Plan for Swansea in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. We are currently in the process of recruiting a Local Nature Partnership Project officer to assist with this work and to support the delivery of nature recovery across the County.

Much progress has been made during the last two years enabled by revenue and capital funding from Welsh Government, NRW and others. Examples include

- Welsh Government Local Places for Nature Grant: Penllergaer Valley Woods - the restoration of a PAWS(Plantation on Ancient Woodland) woodland through the clearance of non-native species and replanting with new native broadland woodland.
- Welsh Government Local Places for Nature Grant: Swansea Nature Network – creating, enhancing and connecting biodiversity assets to create resilient multifunctional greenspaces, ecosystems and wildlife sites within and around urban communities. This has included tree planting and the creation of new community orchards and the management of grassland areas for pollinators.

The recently awarded an Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing schemes (ENRaW); Welsh Government Rural Communities –grant ‘Connecting Green Infrastructure South West Wales’ will enable us to recruit additional temporary staff to deliver wider benefits for biodiversity across the whole county and also at a local Ward scale , and to engage more actively with communities and volunteers over the next 18mths.

3.3 **Develop a Sustainable Transport Strategy** – A task and finish group has been established to bring together all the great work currently being undertaken across the Highways and Transportation service area. This includes:

- Green Fleet
- Grey Fleet
- Street Lighting
- Other transportation e.g. taxi, schools etc.
- Active travel

This includes the new strategy for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) recently presented to committee, as part of the green fleet strategy which is required by Welsh Government to enable it to align it with any upcoming grant awards. It is proposed that the draft Sustainable Transport Strategy is presented to PDC in January 2022.

3.4 A draft **Tree Management Strategy** is also being presented to Economy, Environment & Infrastructure PDC on 16th Dec setting out protocols for the management and maintenance of trees on/affecting land/property in Council ownership as well as the Council's duties in relation to protected trees.

3.5 **New School Buildings** - We are working closely with Education colleagues to further enhance our Employer's Requirements (ERs) and meet the Welsh Government target of net-zero carbon schools from 1st January 2022 and further detail and funding mechanisms will be available in due course.

3.6 **Procurement.** The following policies and guides are in development:

- A new socially responsible and sustainability procurement policy.
- A procurement guide for social value procurement.
- A social value procurement checklist.
- Introduction of mandatory completion of a sustainable risk assessment as part of procurement planning stage for procurements above a certain threshold. (Threshold value to be confirmed)
- A new procurement notification form which incorporates socially responsible procurement considerations.
- A new contract award report to capture what consideration has been given to social value during the procurement process, the expected outcomes and monitoring arrangements.

This may be a policy area where the PDC would wish consider as part of their forward work programme.

3.7 **Housing** - The **decarbonisation** of 13,580 Council owned houses in line with emerging WHQS2 Guidance has commenced. The cost of the programme is estimated to be £750m over a 10 year delivery period. Future progress will depend on availability of financial resources. The Council is working with Welsh Government to identify a capital funding delivery model. Initial demonstrator schemes will help establish technical solutions and supply chains to deliver at scale and pace as finance becomes available.

The Council's **More Homes Strategy** and associated 4 year development plans are focussed on providing new build Council housing, and set an ambitious 10 year delivery plan for 1000 new affordable homes. The Council developed its own Swansea Standard for new build, which can be combined with renewable technologies to create Homes as Power Stations. The key aim is to reduce energy demand and

reduce fuel poverty for residents. Every More Homes development places a strong emphasis on providing a variety of housing types and tenures to meet local need, building places at a walkable scale, with homes, local facilities and public transport within walking distance of each other and integrating green infrastructure, informed by the planning authority's Green Infrastructure Assessment. Every new home also contains a swift brick to encourage nesting birds.

The Strategy also includes an acquisitions element.

This was last reported to the PDC in March 2021 and is due to again be reported early in 2022.

- 3.8 The **Waste Strategy Policy** 2022-25 to take us to 70% has been drafted and is being discussed with the Cabinet Member prior to Cabinet in the New Year. The committee may consider this area as a suitable topic for their future work programme.

Biodiversity (maintenance of grassed areas) – Update report going to PDC on 16 December outlining further trials next season for the creation of biodiverse grassed areas (meadow lands). Further cut and collection equipment is being purchased, and work is ongoing to categorise options for different highway verge scenarios.

- 3.9 **Green Infrastructure Strategy** Swansea Central Area: Regenerating our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife was adopted in Feb 2021 by the Council following engagement by the PDC. Over the last 10 months the focus has been on embedding and delivering the outcomes of the strategy and includes internal staff knowledge and skill development and securing capital funding from the Welsh Government and Local Nature Partnership for green infrastructure/nature based solutions and biodiversity schemes. Schemes currently being delivered include:

- Local Places for Nature: City Nature - increasing and enhancing nature in the city centre,

We have recently been awarded an Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing schemes (ENRaW); Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development programme 2014 – 2020 grant 'Connecting Green Infrastructure South West Wales' – this revenue grant for next 18 months focusing on taking a regional collaborative approach to designing and implementing green infrastructure and nature recovery across Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Carmarthenshire.

In addition over the last 10 months we have seen a number of GI typologies including green walls and green roofs being installed in the city centre including the Environment Centre in Pier Street, Coastal High Street office buildings and most recently Potter Wheel on the Kingsway.

Next steps going forward include continuing to deliver schemes on the ground and the design and development of the countywide GI Strategy which it would be expected will be progressed in conjunction with the PDC from March 2022.

3.10 **Local Development Plan** - National planning policy and guidance places an increasing emphasis on the role of planning to address the challenges of the climate and nature emergencies. Swansea's LDP, adopted in 2019, provides the Council, as the Local Planning Authority, with a clear strategic framework to guide development to meet these challenges at the local level. More recently, the Council have prepared a suite of supplementary planning guidance to support the implementation of the LDP, and adopted the DcFW Placemaking Charter. This has considerably strengthened the Council's ability to make planning decisions which deliver against a range of critical corporate duties, responsibilities and objectives, (including, WCFG Act - Social & Economic Duty, EA(W) Act – s6 Biodiversity duty – obligations under Sustainable Drainage guidance etc). The Placemaking and Strategic Planning team play a key role in guiding the placemaking, master planning and delivery of large scale, strategic developments to ensure that they are in accordance with local and national climate change and nature emergency policy objectives. The team are also specifically involved in policy implementation on the More Homes, providing advice on the sustainability of the Council's own developments against policy objectives. Currently the supporting SPG is progressed via the planning committee

3.11 **Energy Plan** - On 19th November 2020, the Energy and Carbon Management Plan and Action Plan was approved by Cabinet following engagements with the PDC. It provides a co-ordinated approach which will identify and analyse energy and carbon emissions from the delivery of the Authority's operational service deliveries and will

- Provide an overarching programme that will align and integrate all legislations and policies that relate to energy, carbon management and climate change
- Clearly define Swansea Council strategic ambition and intent for addressing energy and carbon management
- Quantify the Authority's baseline carbon emissions from its service property activities.
- Identify and evaluate energy saving projects towards reducing energy costs
- Adapt to the new Welsh Government Public Sector Net Zero Carbon Reporting requirements,
- Adapt a low carbon / renewable technology way of working, reducing the dependency on conventional energy supplies.

The plans were presented to Scrutiny Programme Committee on 14th September 2021 in response to a request by Cabinet Members to explore responsibilities and issues in relation to the Energy and

Climate Change Strategy, included within the Climate Change and Service Transformation Portfolio.

In 2017, the Welsh Government (WG) set the ambition of achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. In doing so, WG recognised the public sector is uniquely placed to influence emissions far more widely than its own, relatively small direct emissions in areas such as transport, energy and land use. As well as tackling the issues of air pollution, WG deem that this approach can have a positive impact on the local economy by reducing energy costs and by creating investment opportunities for the low carbon economy.

In March 2019, WG published Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales which includes Policy 20: '*Support the public sector to baseline, monitor and report progress towards carbon neutrality.*'

Achieving this aim will require, amongst other things:

- Achieving net zero carbon emissions through actions to reduce emissions and increase the removal of carbon from the atmosphere;
- Understanding the priorities, costs, stakeholders and wider impacts of actions;
- Improving understanding of opportunities to implement climate change mitigation;
- Improving understanding of the role of the public sector in influencing change in the wider society and economic system.

It is intended that the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon guide published in May 2021 replaces and builds on the Carbon Reduction Commitment scheme, for which the last reporting year was 2018/19. The approach also delivers against Policy 19: '*Welsh Government to consult on options for successor Carbon Reduction Commitment Scheme*' in summer 2019. The guide details the principles and priorities for the Welsh Public Sector Net Zero Carbon reporting approach, its operational and organisational scope and the data which public bodies in Wales will need to assemble in order to fulfil the reporting requirements covering Energy including Water; Transport; Waste; Supply Chain Emissions and Land-based Emissions and Sequestration.

3.12 Well-being of Future Generations Act - The Council's Sustainable Development Policy is being updated and will be going to PDC for further review in January. The Corporate Plan which sets out the Council's well-being objectives for the next five years is also being reviewed for 2022-27 by services and leadership. This takes into account the Council's response to the climate and nature emergencies. The process will also inform the development of service plans for the next year. The Council's Strategic Equality Plan runs until 2024 and links to the corporate plan. It currently addresses many climate and nature issues in relation to fairness for all.

4. Integrated Assessment Implications

4.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

4.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

4.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

4.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required. This report covers an overarching strategy, each action as and when pursued will be screened independently. The IIA screening form is attached as **Appendix 2**

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. However, it is clear to reach both the 2030 and 2050 targets, significant investment is required and any such decisions would be subject to separate cabinet reports at the time with the council continuing to lobby both Welsh and UK Governments to seek appropriate funding

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: These will be included within the report.

Appendix 1	Climate Change and Nature Strategy
Appendix 2	IIA