



Report of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

Climate Change Scrutiny Performance Panel – 2nd May 2023

Swansea Council Delivering on Nature Recovery & Climate Change – Achievements against Corporate Priority Objectives and Policy Commitments

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an update on achievement against Corporate Priorities / Objectives / Policy Commitments in relation to Nature Recovery and Climate Change
Content	<p>This report includes a summary of achievements on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Plan Priority Objectives Policy Commitments
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider progress on Corporate Plan Priority Objectives Consider progress on Policy Commitments
Lead Councillor(s)	<p>Councillor Andrea Lewis, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Service Transformation,</p> <p>Councillor David Hopkins, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance.</p> <p>(Councillor Andrew Stevens, Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure and Councillor Anderson, Cabinet Member for Community)</p>
Lead Officer(s)	Director of Place – Mark Wade
Report Author	Rachel Lewis – Place Directorate Project Manager
Legal Officer	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer	Ben Smith
Access to Services Officer	Rhian Millar

1. Background

1.1 During the 2022-23 reporting cycle, this briefing note summarises delivery outcomes in regard to:

- The Corporate Priority Well-being Objective - Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change. **Appendix 1 page 29**
- The 2022-23 Policy Commitments.

1.2 Progress can be seen on all activity which is to be commended in light of the limited resource specifically dedicated to this agenda.

2. Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change Corporate Priority Well-being Objective.

2.1 A new corporate wellbeing objective, focuses on Swansea Council NZ2030, Swansea NZ2050 and Nature Recovery ambitions. The Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change objective aims to maintain and enhance nature and biodiversity in Swansea, reduce our carbon footprint and tackle climate change. The objective included the following activity for 22-23:

2.2 **Biodiversity** - Develop, adopt and implement a Corporate Biodiversity (Section 6) Action Plan in line with Welsh Government's 3-year reporting cycle alongside the preparation and delivery of a Nature Recovery Action Plan in collaboration with The Swansea Nature Partnership and the preparation of a County wide Green Infrastructure Strategy.

- *Swansea Council's second Section 6 Biodiversity Report (2020-22) was approved by Cabinet on the 15th December 2022 and submitted to Welsh Government. Third Action Plan currently being prepared*
- *Nature Recovery Action Plan being prepared in conjunction with Swansea Nature Partnership. Initial framework agreed, detailed draft plan now being developed. County wide Green Infrastructure Strategy – a joint project with Natural Resources Wales delayed until 23/24*

2.3 **Climate Change and Nature Strategy** - Embed a Climate Change and Nature Strategy and Action Plan, working with and encouraging partners, organisations, businesses, communities and individuals to support nature recovery and reduce their carbon footprint, signing up to the Climate and Nature Charter /Pledge.

- *Climate Change & Nature Recovery Strategy approved at Dec 22 Cabinet.*
- *30 actions by 2030 Action plan approved at December 22 Cabinet.*
- *More detailed delivery plan now being developed.*
- *5 new PI's created to monitor progress in all areas from 23-24 onwards.*

Swansea Council Net Zero – 30 Actions by 2030

Buildings & Energy	Fleet & Mobile Equipment	Land Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decarbonise our public estate by reviewing our asset management strategy. • Reduce the energy consumed across the council's buildings and estate. • Encourage employee behaviour change through training and process improvement • Decarbonise street lighting with more LED's • Ensure all new buildings are constructed to the highest possible sustainability standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition the Council's fleet to zero emission equivalents in accordance with the Welsh Government's expectation of light commercial vehicles by 2025 and other vehicles by 2030 • Establish a fleet vehicle charge point infrastructure that supports this transition • Optimise fleet vehicle use and efficiency • Establish integrated data systems for GHG measurement • Revise and approve the appropriate supporting policies, procedures and working practices • Decarbonise Grey Fleet travel • Decarbonise mobile plant equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LDP policy reviewed to protect land soils and habitats rich in carbon • Increase terrestrial Central Area GI to 26% • Tree planting areas mapped county wide 1000s new trees planted • 30% of protected sites (local nature reserves, etc.) in positive management for biodiversity
Waste	New Ways of Working	Supply Chain
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage circular economy values within Swansea Council – to minimise and prevent - reduce, reuse, recycle, • Reduce operational single use plastics wherever possible • Reduce operational waste e.g. food, paper • Encourage operational recycle and repair. • Reduce Construction Waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop emissions data monitoring processes • Reduce commuting miles • Deliver agile working policy • Develop staff active travel plan • Implement Healthy Travel Charter in Swansea Council • Develop an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to Net Carbon Zero in our supply chain by 2050 • Through forward planning and innovation develop new specifications for our contracts that deliver Net Carbon Zero • Map and monitor our progress, with appropriate prioritisation and target setting

2.4 Energy Action Plan - Deliver the energy action plan, working towards creating a low carbon economy, which promotes renewable energy and takes actions to reduce the carbon footprint for Swansea Council and Swansea in line with Welsh government reporting guidelines.

- *Buildings and Energy & Fleet actions are now included in the 30 actions by 2030 Action Plan approved at Cabinet December 22 as per above diagram.*

2.5 Procurement and Social Value - Review the Councils' Procurement approach to embed its social value within its ward criteria maximising the local spend within the locality and region and reducing the carbon footprint of its commissioned activities.

- *Development of a Socially Responsible and Sustainability in Procurement Policy – this will be developed in line with/to support new procurement legislation that is being developed for*

implementation in late 2023/early 2024 (namely updated UK Public Contract Regulations and a new Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill (Wales)).

- *Commencement of a Social Value pilot programme and development of a Social Value Recording Tool designed to facilitate and enhance focus on social value in contracts and provide a format for capturing and recording good practice and to deliver commitments made in the Council's Net Carbon Zero plan.*
- *There are three pilot projects currently testing the social value tool, namely – the Parks Service framework for playground equipment; Corporate Building Services' project for Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg, Bryn Tawe - a school refurb and new build project, and Social Services housing support programme / framework renewal.*

2.6 Sustainable Transport Strategy - Embed and deliver a sustainable transport strategy and encompassed action plans on active travel, green fleet, grey fleet and street lighting.

- *A draft strategy structure has been developed and reviewed with the Climate Change and Nature Recovery CDC (workshop) in Dec 22. Work is ongoing to develop a draft strategy and action plan, which once agreed and finalised, will be brought forward for approval by both Cabinet and CDC.*

2.7 Energy Efficient Council Homes - Continue to develop the Councils Energy efficient new builds More Council Homes programme to net zero standards and subject to funding begin to roll out the decarbonisation of its existing housing stock in line with emerging Welsh Government Guidance

- *Please see details in section 3.9 below.*

2.8 21st Century Schools and Net Zero - We will commence and ensure that the design and development of all new 21st Century schools to be Net Zero Carbon targets from January 2022. This will include new builds and major refurbishments.

- *The development of a brand new Special School, together with the major reconfiguration and refurbishment of the Bryntawe Welsh Medium School are currently at an early stage of design and will seek to address the Net Zero new schools objective, by utilising materials, heating and ventilation processes and practices.*

2.9 **Net Zero buildings and materials** - We will seek to maximise opportunities to lower carbon input into maintenance and renovation work in existing public buildings and work towards utilising net zero materials by 2030.

- *Within the tender documentation the encouragement to utilise new energy efficient materials and utilise a local workforce and suppliers are encouraged.*
- *Where possible we have increased insulation levels in re-roofing schemes and small scale refurbishments and extensions*

2.10 **Waste reduction strategy** - Deliver a waste reduction strategy, including minimise our use of non-recyclable products and materials, recycle more waste and promote a circular economy.

- *Modelling work is being undertaken with WG consultants to inform options for the Waste Strategy 2025 onward. The modelling will conclude in May 2023 with a draft strategy report prepared for approval later in 2023.*

2.11 **Air, water and soil quality** - Take action to maintain and improve the quality of our air, water and soils.

- *There are a range of activities carried out by the Pollution Control & Private Sector Housing Division:*
- *The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) function, collecting and reporting upon pollutant concentrations recorded.*
- *Collaborative air quality research projects are currently ongoing, funded by Welsh Government grants with external partners, with the aim of testing potential interventions for their effectiveness in reducing exposure.*
- *To protect public health and avoid a detrimental effect on tourism, the Pollution Control team participated in a multi-agency, EU-funded project called 'Smart Coasts' which was a Wales/Ireland cross border programme. During the summer bathing water quality information for Swansea Bay is displayed on signs by the Slip. Results are updated hourly between 8am and 8pm. The water quality can change throughout the day depending on sunlight, wind direction, river flows and the tide.*
- *The aeration system, within the River Tawe, during the summer months, which assists mixing within the water column for dissolved oxygen and salinity concentrations.*
- *Officers carry out risk assessments and monitoring of private drinking water supplies (supply of water not from a water undertaker or licensed supplier) in line with The Private Water Supplies (Wales) Regulations 2017. There are approximately 125 known private water supplies in the council's area.*

- *Participate in the Drought Liaison Group meetings, chaired by Welsh Government, called last summer due to prolonged dry spells and the potential for impact upon insufficiency of water supplies.*
- *Through the Planning Application process, the team assess the requirement for conditions to be attached to approvals to ensure that land contamination is identified and remediated in order to minimise the risk to public health in accordance with the required guidelines.*
- *Investigations also take place if complaints are received about potential contamination to land via emergency incidents or accidents and deliberate releases.*

3. Policy Commitments

Climate Change & Nature Recovery

- 3.1 Swansea Council is committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- *Costed Action Plan approved at December 22 Cabinet.*
 - *PI's introduced for 23 onwards:*
 - *Number of trees planted during the year across the council.*
 - *The increase in number of council locations with renewable energy sources*
 - *Number of Members and officers that have completed Climate Change and Nature Recovery Training*
 - *Number of projects delivered through the Environmental Partners Framework to support ambition of Swansea Net Zero 2050.*
 - *Percentage of the Council fleet which are Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs)*
- 3.2 We will support delivery of the first phase of the Blue Eden Lagoon project.
- *CRF monies awarded to undertake feasibility studies on potential to deliver the wider tidal lagoon proposals.*
 - *Continued discussions with DST as likely developer to support input from Council as land owner and strategic partner.*
- 3.3 We aim to progress the development of a council-operated solar energy farm at the City's Tir John site.
- *Cabinet report to proceed approved.*
 - *Planning permission submitted, awaiting outcome.*

- 3.4 The Council will strive to install more electric vehicle (EV) charging points across the county, supporting a move to more EV ownership.
- *Further grant funding applications have been submitted to Welsh Government, seeking to increase the number of both 'fast' and 'rapid' publicly available EV charge points across Swansea. Providing additional charging capabilities in communities across the City and County, will ensure that additional supporting infrastructure is in place for those wishing to transition to an EV.*
- 3.5 We will install more LED street lighting.
- *We will change 2000 street lighting lanterns to LED which will save approximately, 446,240 kWh resulting in carbon savings of 86,294 kg per Kwh.*
- 3.6 We will develop a new city-wide tree planting map allowing us to plant thousands of new trees in communities.
- *Initial tree assessment of Council owned land in all wards completed.*
 - *Countywide tree canopy coverage and opportunity mapping project commenced Feb 2023 and due to be completed by May 2023.*
 - *Tree management strategy to be updated to include planting sites.*
 - *Maximum tree planting resource capacity within the Council is currently approx. 300 standard and heavy standard trees per annum. Planting proposals also needs to factor in future maintenance costs.*
 - *Approx. 300 trees planted 22/23.*
- 3.7 We aim to make neighbourhood greening improvements.
- *'Wild about your Ward' greening improvements identified for 4 most deprived wards and rolled out- scheme ends June 2023.*
 - *Bid for further 3-year grant funding to roll out to all wards unsuccessful, however a 2 year grant funding offer from Welsh Government (not yet confirmed) will enable the scheme to be rolled out for a further 2 years albeit with reduced staff capacity (loss of one of the 2 project officer posts delivering the work)*
 - *Placemaking Greening schemes undertaken in district and local centres.*
- 3.8 Swansea Council will continue to review the council transport fleet to maximise opportunities for use of a green fleet in line with its green fleet strategy.

- *The Council has been transitioning to 'Green' vehicles since 2010 and currently has 72 full battery electric and 8 'hybrid' battery already in use. This includes an electric refuse collection vehicle and two electric compact road sweepers.*
- *There are a further 35 battery electric vans and cars on order, due early 2023, that would result in the Council having 10% of its fleet as 'green' vehicles.*
- *Forty charge points have been installed across 12 Council sites to support this, with a further 50 currently being installed.*
- *A total of £1 million of Welsh Government grants has been secured so far to support the transition on vehicles and infrastructure*
- *Training has also been provided for 16 fitters at the Central Transport Unit to enable them to work on electric vehicles and to ensure service support is resilient for this new technology.*
- *The Ultra-Low Emission Vehicle Transition Strategy 2021-2030 was adopted following a review by the Welsh Government Energy Service.*

Housing

3.9 Swansea Council commit to providing more energy efficient homes and more affordable homes, alongside more investment in social housing.

- *The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is a long term programme to improve the condition, thermal performance, security and affordability of social housing owned by the Council in Swansea. On completion of the original WHQS on 31st December 2021, the Council had invested more than £546m over 18 years to make its housing stock compliant with the Standard.*
- *From the beginning of this current financial year 2022/23, WHQS passed from a compliance target stage to a maintenance phase. The investment for this year's capital programme is revised to £38.8m with WHQS delivering £27.4m across the financial year and £11.4m completed for the More Homes new build and acquisition programme.*
- *The Housing Service has secured £2.6m of Welsh Government Optimised Retrofit Programme grant funding to support schemes contributing towards affordable warmth and carbon reduction targets. £770,000 of grant has also been secured from Welsh Government's Building Safety programme to support the installation of sprinklers at Griffith John Street.*
- *Welsh Government has consulted with social housing providers in Wales about a new standard they intend to introduce which is now planned for the latter part of 2023. The new Standard,*

WHQS2023, will build on the achievements of the earlier standards with a major policy objective of making all social housing in Wales net zero carbon by the mid 2030's. Large scale investment programmes will be required to meet the future statutory duties that will also increase fire and safety standards and environmental improvements and water saving measures.

- *The Council's More Homes Programme has set a ten-year delivery ambition of 1,000 new affordable homes to be directly delivered by the Council, along with a further 4,000 properties delivered by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) in Swansea.*
- *The Council has developed a high specification for the properties it is building - the "Swansea Standard". The aim is to deliver energy, efficient, environmentally conscious homes that exceed current regulatory performance standards to achieve net zero carbon buildings, providing a positive contribution towards the drive to eradicate fuel-poverty through the installation of renewable technology. The Swansea Standard will be reviewed in 2023/24 to ensure that it takes into account recent changes in Building Regulations and continues to provide the required performance uplift, in preparation for the next tranche of schemes currently in development.*
- *Overall, the More Homes programme has delivered the following to date:*
 - *Completed to date = 222*
(New build/conversion= 97 Acquisitions = 125)
 - *Conversions under construction = 12 – completing in summer 2023**Plans are in development to deliver the following:*
 - *Pipeline to start in 4-year programme = 534*
(New build = 321 Acquisitions = 213)
 - *Pipeline to start in 10-year programme = 263*
- *In addition to the Council's own building programme, we continue to work closely with RSL partners to ensure we maximise the delivery of affordable housing through the allocation of Welsh Government Social Housing Grant (SHG) through the Programme Development Plan, which is managed by the Council. Swansea's allocation of SHG from Welsh Government was £23.7m for 2022/23.*
- *Work also continues in conjunction with the Planning Department to maximise the number of planning applications approved by the Council that achieve the stated % threshold of mixed-use tenure affordable homes.*

100 Days Target: Transport and Energy

3.10 The Council will announce progress on the Blue Eden project.

- *Formal report on council involvement in Lagoon project due Summer 23.*

3.11 Swansea Council will support and enable the increase and availability of electric vehicle (EV) charging points and develop a wider EV charging strategy.

- *A grant application has been made to the Welsh Government to support the authority in installing additional publicly available EV charge points in 2023/24, and resource to develop an EV Charging Strategy for Swansea.*

3.12 We will continue to review the council transport fleet to increase the green fleet in line with its agreed green fleet strategy.

- See section 3.8 above

3.13 We will progress discussions on the development of a hydrogen fuelling.

- *Forms part of Western Gateway discussions*

4. Legal implications

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report for information only.

5. Finance Implications

5.1 To remind scrutiny committee as per the previous January report, the full financial cost of achieving Net Zero can still only be considered an estimate at this stage and broad financial implications were noted in section 7 of the 15th December Cabinet report.

5.2 The report sets out initial estimates of the costs of legal duties upon the Council. It remains unclear whether any financial assistance will be forthcoming from Welsh or UK governments to meet all or any of the costs given this Council like all others faces a plethora of other legal obligations and a stark outlook in real terms for public finances for the foreseeable future of the decade.

- 5.3 No future budgets have been provided for any of these indicative future costs to date to be met by the Council. This reflects the explicit presumption that the Council will not be expected to fund costs out of core spending, but that alternative external sources of finance will be provided by national governments. However, consideration should be given to spend to save initiatives, for example future phases of the ReFit programme.
- 5.4 By way of potential context and scale only, if capital budgets were to be provided from now onwards over the forthcoming 7 years to 2030 it would be prudent to assume £25m per annum of additional capital obligations each year growing cumulatively to £175m This would be the most prudent, assuming zero support from government. It is likely to overstate the cost and risk as neither UK nor Welsh government could reasonably expect individual councils to meet the costs in isolation.
- 5.5 If this Council were expected to have to fully fund itself then at current likely rates and MRP this would cost coming on £2m per annum rising cumulatively to £12m by 2030 in capital financing costs. This broad estimate is at today's prices and interest rate outlook and could vary significantly in practice.
- 5.6 Cabinet and Council will have to have due regard to this in all future budget setting and MTFP decision rounds. Its appetite for revenue versus capital spending decisions, the timing of those decisions and it's prioritisation of competing legislative obligations will be an undiluted challenge as the Audit Wales report acknowledges .The longer uncertainty persists over funding support or lack of support and the longer Council does not explicitly provide for any future costs the bigger the risk of inevitable end loaded costs if no external support is obtained.
- 5.7 It is clear in any scenario residual carbon emissions will remain even after action and, subject to the views of WG in terms of their carbon emissions reporting guidance, there could be planned for costs of offsetting in either the revenue budgets from 2030 onwards (minimum £0.5m at current prices) or before that further capital (£27.5m at current prices)
- 5.8 At present the budget presumption is repeated that this Council is assuming that 100% of all costs are met externally as they materially transcend its ability to afford them itself.”

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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'.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 THIS REPORT IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY AND DOES NOT REQUIRE AN IIA SCREENING

Background papers: *None*

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan 22-23 pg 29 onwards