



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 2 May 2023 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor H Lawson (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
M W Locke

Councillor(s)
M H Jones
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)
S E Keeton
W G Thomas

Other Attendees

David Hopkins
Andrea Lewis

Cabinet Member – Corporate Service and Performance
Cabinet Member – Service Transformation

Officer(s)

Geoff Bacon
Mark Barrow
Liz Jordan
Rachel Lewis
Mark Wade

Head of Property Services
Fleet Manager Highways and Transportation
Scrutiny Officer
Directorate Project Manager
Director of Place

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): C M J Evans
Other Attendees: A H Stevens

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

No disclosures of interest were received.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were made.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting on 8 March 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Climate Change Update

Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Service Transformation, Mark Barrow, Fleet Manager and Geoff Bacon, Head of Property Services attended to update the Panel on this issue and answer questions.

Discussion Points:

- Panel heard the Council faces a number of challenges in relation to Green Vehicle Adoption. Welsh Government and UK Government have tight targets which must be met in terms of low emission vehicles.
- Panel pleased to hear Swansea Council is well ahead of other councils in Wales in terms of numbers of battery electric/hybrid vehicles.
- Cabinet Member stated the Council does not have the budget to undertake many things in relation to climate change and nature recovery including green vehicle adoption and will have to lobby hard both the Welsh Government and UK Government for the resources it needs to meet the targets.
- Panel queried if greening the fleet was best use of any money that becomes available and if this has been modelled. Heard in terms of efficiencies, the department does not want to make false economies but will change to electric where it can.
- In relation to downsizing vehicles, Panel wanted to know if this would be inefficient or unproductive. Heard all Council vehicles are deployed with telematics which has driven efficiency. Also, smaller vans will minimise the opportunity for excess load and will still be able to carry everything they need.
- Panel queried where the Council's energy comes from as need to be using renewable energy to charge up electric vehicles. Informed the Council is using 100% renewable sources for its electricity so is currently 100% green, but it cannot be guaranteed going forward.
- Panel queried if Council has got a battery recycling policy in place. Informed there is not currently one in place.
- Panel discussed how it is better to keep current vehicles for as long as possible rather than just replacing them with electric and can keep an eye on new markets at the same time.
- Panel expressed concern about how some renewable energy is achieved, for example wind turbines, and if damage is being done to other parts of the environment to achieve renewable outcomes. Heard major solar farms, major wind turbines etc are outside of the Council's control.
- Panel queried how much more expensive electric vehicles are in comparison to diesel. Informed lighter commercial are 25-30% more expensive, heavy goods are 100-150% more expensive. It is hoped cost of vehicles will come down in price through economies of scale.
- Panel wanted to know if weight of vehicles is something that needs to be considered as far as roads are concerned. Heard electric vehicles are heavier and this will impact on the road network, car parks and bridges etc longer term as more people transition to electric.
- Report proposes that in future the Panel receives an annual update on Climate Change.

Actions:

- Add Update on Climate Change to future work programme in May/June 2024.

6 Achievement against Corporate Priorities / Objectives / Policy Commitments

Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Service Transformation, David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance and Geoff Bacon attended for this item and informed the Panel that this is a huge area spanning a number of portfolios.

Heard the report gives some examples of specific activities to demonstrate action going forward. The Council is trying to do as much as it can in terms of development, developing policies, working with regional partners, doing some early activities and early outcomes where it has got them with limited resources and in a worsening financial climate.

7 Panel Review of the Year 2022-23

Panel Members reviewed their year on the Climate Change and Nature Panel and made the following comments:

- Panel has done some valuable work although finance is always an issue. Hope Panel will be able to continue this work going forward.
- Finance - having to think more about how we spend money is not such a negative.
- Possible topic for future work plan - How planning process works with biodiversity and how we encourage people to work with nature. Checklist / toolkit on biodiversity which people can look at to see if they have considered different aspects of nature, biodiversity etc, would be a good idea.
- Positive things done within the Panel.
- Vital for the Panel to look at Planning.
- Battery disposal – maybe worth a discussion on how we can lobby Welsh Government about it.
- SUDS – great idea but there are some bad SUDS practices. Need to look at it and how we can make it work. Recommend Panel Members do SUDS training.

Actions:

- Add to future work programme – Planning: discussion on how to encourage people to look at biodiversity within planning applications.
- Update on battery disposal to be included in next update to Panel on Climate Change.
- Update on SUDS to be included in next update to Panel on Local Flood Risk Management.

The meeting ended at 10.50 am