



City and County of Swansea

**Minutes of the Economy, Environment & Infrastructure Policy Development Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 2.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor C Anderson (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

J E Burtonshaw  
P K Jones  
P Lloyd

**Councillor(s)**

P Downing  
M A Langstone  
P M Matthews

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
W G Lewis  
T M White

**Officer(s)**

Scott Dummett  
David Meyrick  
Carol Morgan  
Martin Nicholls  
Mark Wade  
Samantha Woon

Senior Lawyer  
  
More Homes Development Manager  
Director of Place  
Head of Housing & Public Health  
Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s):

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**27 To receive Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests from Members.**

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

**28 Minutes:**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Policy Development Committee held on 18 February, 2021, be approved as a correct record.

**29 More Homes Strategy and Decarbonisation of Existing Housing Stock.**

The Head of Housing and Public Health, assisted by the Programme Planning and Delivery Manager for Council Investment and the More Homes Development Manager presented a report which outlined the More Homes Strategy and the emerging development programme for new council homes funded by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The report outlined current progress and future aspirations for the Council's development programme.

The report also outlined progress in achieving Welsh Housing Quality Standard, the approach to decarbonise the existing Council Housing stock, and the pilot schemes being designed to test principles and inform the future strategy.

Officers detailed the Background to the More Homes Strategy, More Homes Specification – The Swansea Standard, Completed Schemes and Current Activity, Future Schemes and Planned Activity, Background to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and Decarbonisation, Past Energy Efficiency Delivery, Future Decarbonisation Programme – National Policy Development, Welsh Government Draft Decarbonisation Policy Proposals, Transitional Period – Decarbonisation Pilot Schemes, Proposed Future Decarbonisation Strategy and Future Opportunities, Challenges and Risks for the Council.

Officers referred to the presentation on Swansea Council Building Better Homes & Decarbonising Existing Homes. The presentation detailed:

- The More Homes Journey.
- Expected Benefits of Passivhaus.
- The Journey towards HAPS.
- The HAPS Concept.
- Swansea Standard Developments.
- HAPS Technologies.
- Outcomes.
- Current and Planned Activities.
- Decarbonising Existing Housing.
- WQHS Energy Efficiency Work.
- WGHS Energy Efficiency Investment.
- Energy Efficiency Improvements.
- Benefits of Energy Efficiency Programme.
- Insulated Render External Fabric Upgrade.
- Energy Efficiency External Fabric Upgrade.
- Future Decarbonisation Policy Development.
- Draft Decarbonisation Policy Proposals.
- Decarbonisation Targets.
- Decarbonisation Pilot Schemes.
- Pilot Scheme Decarbonisation Specification.
- HaPS Whole House Retrofit at Ffordd Ellen.
- Retrofit Pilot at Ffordd Ellen – Before & After.
- Renewable Supply & Storage.
- Whole House Retrofit at Lon y Felin.
- Renewables at Lon y Felin.
- Adopted Retrofit Decarbonisation Strategy.
- Opportunities.
- Challenges.
- Risks.

The Cabinet Member for Energy and Service Transformation thanked Officers for their comprehensive report. Members' noted that there had been exceptional cross departmental working, in terms of the Swansea Standard with efforts concentrated on creating local jobs, supporting local supply chains, benefitting tenants with high energy efficient homes, generating green renewable technologies, tackling fuel poverty and building sustainable communities with all homes built to a lifetime home standard. The Committee were invited to visit the sites when lockdown restrictions are lifted. There still remained a significant demand for homes across Swansea with 4000 currently on the Council waiting list.

The WQHS has generated major investment of just under half a billion pound in 13500 Council homes which also creates significant improvements in terms of energy efficiency.

In addition to upskilling the workforce the Council are also working closely with local colleges to align their courses with renewable technologies which will be the jobs of the future.

Decarbonisation remained a huge challenge to the Council in terms of funding. Timing was also important as efforts needed to be concentrated on our investment in new homes and an estimated £350m in decarbonisation of existing homes is not a small drop in the ocean.

The Cabinet Member for Energy referred to her role within the WLGA representing the Housing Cabinet Member.

In response to Member questions, the Cabinet Member and Officers stated that:

- Whilst there would be no further Passivhaus constructions, it was felt that the pilot had served as a good initial project and as a result decisions had been made to source materials locally, thus supporting local small to medium businesses. Additionally, procuring materials locally (within a 15 mile radius) reduced carbon footprint.
- Thermal upgrades had been undertaken and renewables would be commence post 2025. 25, The aim is to prioritise the remainder of properties that have not been upgraded. Whilst doing those properties PV panels and storage will be integrated. Low carbon heating solutions will be addressed later in the programme.
- In terms of cold bridging we also have to put this on the reveals and the heads to eliminate cold bridges. The insulating measures we put in place are consistent and there are no weakness in the insulation that we apply..
- There is a target in building regulations that sets out the number of air changes per hour required. Our Swansea Standard aims to improve that figure. In relation to Parc Y Helyg, details of those figures would be submitted to the Committee in due course,
- Air tightness aims to reduce and minimise draughts that can potentially get into a property and assists with the thermal performance and potential heat loss. In terms of air tightness, Passivhaus was 0.6, standard building regulations are

around 10 and our Swansea Standard is coming in at about 3.4/3.5 so the difference between Passivhaus and Swansea Standard is very small.

- The Welsh Government Strategy concentrates on housing stock in Wales as they feel they have greater control at being able to roll out decarbonisation programmes in social housing, They are hoping the programmes we deliver can be used to encourage the private sector going forward so that we believe they are looking at a target of 2035 for delivery of private sector housing.
- The Welsh Government are examining building regulations in relation to thermal efficiency on new build properties. It is imperative that there is a balance between build cost and resale value.
- Homes as Power Stations are yet to receive approval as a City Deal project and therefore no money is flowing in terms of this Project. It is anticipated that the business deal will be signed off in the next 2-3 months by the UK and Welsh Government and our scheme will be part of that and will align the two things.
- Monitoring programme equipment was installed in Colliers Way 1, Colliers Way 2 and Parc y Helyg. However, there are no figures available due to the disruption created by COVID. New systems will provide more effective remote monitoring. Figures will be available when the Welsh School of Architecture can gain access to properties.
- Community Councillor both Councils have passed climate emergency motions and looking at community centres. Out to consultants fascinated at what I have heard today. Budget for HRA this year, forecasting spend 350m over next 10 years, 70m for last five years. Implications of those figures, looking to borrow 100m 2% over 4m a year on top of charges. Reduces the amount for development work.
- Whilst acknowledging the HRA is complex HRA and business plan is very intricate and does not reflect any future grants that may be accessed. The Council will be making representations to the Welsh Government for additional funding otherwise our priorities will be split between completing WQBS and the backlog of maintenance and repairs. It is illegal to borrow over capacity & put the HRA into debt. The Council cautiously retains the level of reserves that is appropriate,

Finance at the heart, more grants the better.

First call on future maintenance budget for existing homes is to maintain WQHS second bit 350m built up in house costs typically fabric improvements extrapolated that out. Approximate. Decarbonisation of the grid is a huge factor in that if we can get low carbon heating without wholesale changes to existing gas we have going into homes that figure will come down. 350m figure built up based up to achieve SAP 92 IER 96 and extrapolated against stock.

19 jobs per million investment, how many apprentices have we taken on since the start of the WQHS and how many do we envisage taking on going forward. City Deal 500m a lot in private sector, this money hasn't started dripping down for HAPS scheme, if developers come along and use this Scheme then they would have to build to the standards of the Scheme, How many developers try and use City Deal.

Recruit 17 this year, 76 across the piste. Not just in connection with construction in terms of WQHS but also connected to our education capital programme and they are pleased and delighted to be involved in the development sites because its live site experience. Trade skills gap so working really well we are growing our own talent working well. In addition to apprenticeships we look at people long term unemployed within the communities we do employ people within the communities and I know housing associations and private developers do as well. Bringing jobs to City and region.

52 person weeks per million pound, effectively 1 apprenticeship or 1 unemployed person, often that number is exceeded. Significantly exceeded if the Council is the developer. Apprenticeships not employed on complete totality 250 recruited 2/3 of 66% have come through Council's in house. 75 apprenticeships specifically reemployed on housing schemes. HAPS funding key aspect of supply chain development and skills development to ensure we have the appropriate number of people trained up to instal and maintain the equipment in these properties. Training for staff so we can maintain systems we are installing. Wider benefits to the communtieies as part of this delivery. Create and retain as many of those jobs in the Swansea Bay area.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for their informative report.

**Resolved that:**

1. The Committee note the contents of the report and confirmed that the current policy context continued to be appropriate as the council developed its decarbonisation strategy of its housing stock

**30 Work Plan 2020-2022.**

The Chair referred to the work plan and requested that an additional item be included regarding the citing of bus stops. The Director of Place stated that the Traffic Commissioner has responsibility for the citing of bus stops and this is not a policy the Council can set.

**Resolved that:**

- 1) The work plan be noted.
- 2) The Management and Maintenance of Open Space (Biodiversity & Tree Policy) be considered at the meeting on 22 April, 2021.
- 3) The Director of Place consider options regarding the citing of bus stops.

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(18.03.2021)  
Cont'd

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm

**Chair**