

## Final Internal Audit Briefing Note

### Head of Property Services

## Net Zero 2030

### 1. Background

- 1.1 An internal audit review of the governance arrangements in place for the Council's objective of becoming a "Net Zero" Council by 2030 has been undertaken.
- 1.2 It was established that a climate change emergency was declared by Swansea Council in June 2019, and to demonstrate the Council's commitment to a Net Zero Swansea, a Swansea Council Charter on Climate Change was approved at Council on 3 December 2020.
- 1.3 The Charter sets out the Council's commitment to work towards becoming a Net Zero organisation by:
  - Committing to work towards a Net Zero carbon as an organisation by 2030.
  - Taking actions to meet the challenge of a climate emergency.
  - Working collaboratively with partners to develop a strategy.
  - Involving stakeholders including children and young people in a trust building dialogue.
- 1.4 The Council aims to lead by example and challenge citizens, businesses and partner organisations to make their own commitments in the form of a wider Swansea Charter on Climate Change.

### 2. Governance Arrangements

- 2.1 We were informed that the Council's internal governance structure involves comprehensive monitoring processes, and it was evident that much has already been achieved including:
  - The Council making nature recovery a Wellbeing objective in its Corporate Plan for 2020-2022.
  - Supporting the delivery of the 'Working with Nature' objective in the Swansea Public Services Board Well-being Plan.
  - The creation of a Climate Change and Nature Recovery Programme Board and a Climate Change and Nature Recovery Steering Group.
  - Two training modules on the topic of Climate Change & Nature Recovery have been created for Council staff to complete on the Fusion database.
  - A Strategy, Action Plan and targets were approved by Cabinet in December 2022.
  - Reductions in emissions are being achieved and reported annually to Welsh Government.

- 2.2 It was clear that whilst the Council is making progress to becoming Net Zero by 2030, the ambition is extremely challenging.
- 2.3 There is no specific budget allocated to this ambition in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and efforts have been made to secure alternative funding.
- 2.4 While progress has been made, officers within the Place Directorate have identified a significant risk. The ambition of being a Net Zero council by 2030 is unlikely to be achieved as there are concerns over funding available, skills within the workforce, the supply chain for the products required, and a lack of true 'buy in' to the agenda in some parts of the Council.
- 2.5 As a result, Net Zero 2030 has been recorded as a Risk in Corporate Risk Register, with a Red/Amber/Green status of Red and it was confirmed that the Risk is being updated on a monthly basis as required.
- 2.6 A report was presented to CMT/Cabinet Awayday on 25 January 2024 outlining the progress made to date in reducing the Council's emissions and the challenges that remain. Updates are also being provided to the Transformation Delivery Board as Net Zero 2030 is one of the 12 programmes included in the Council's Transformation Programme Plan.
- 2.7 A Service Transformation Committee reviews the Council's policy commitments regarding Climate Change and Nature Recovery. A report on the progress made towards Net Zero by 2050 was reviewed by the Committee in December 2023 but the work programme for 2023/24 did not review Swansea Council becoming a Net Zero council by 2030.
- 2.8 Progress in achieving Net Zero 2030 has been reported to Cabinet annually since 2020. It was noted though that an update report prepared for Corporate Briefing in March 2024 has not yet been presented.
- 2.9 An update on Swansea Council Net Zero 2030 was provided to the Climate Change Scrutiny Performance Panel in May 2023 and a further review is due in May/June 2024.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 From the audit review carried out, it was found that the Council's progress in achieving its objective of being Net Zero by 2030 was being monitored at or by the following forums:
- Climate Change Steering Group
  - Climate Change & Nature Recovery Programme Board
  - Transformation Delivery Board
  - Scrutiny Performance Panel
  - CMT/Cabinet Awayday.

- 3.2 As a result, it has been deemed that adequate governance arrangements are in place. However, it is recommended that the latest progress report prepared in March 2024 is presented to Corporate Briefing and Cabinet at the earliest opportunity and that in accordance with the previous year's 2020-22 that progress reports are presented to Corporate Briefing/Cabinet following the annual Carbon emissions reporting to Welsh Government.
- 3.3 This audit was conducted in conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.