

**Providing Council with Written Responses to Questions asked at Council
26 September 2019**

1.	<p>Sue Lyle</p> <p>Public Questions - In relation to Minute 72 “Updated Welsh Housing Quality Standard Compliance Policy”</p> <p>“Considering housing consumes 30% of all fossil-fuel energy and that every fact we have about the climate point to the urgency of action, when will all houses in the public sector be retrofitted to reduce carbon emissions which will also help combat fuel poverty and boost the green economy”</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Service Transformation</p> <p>As part of the Council’s WHQS £.5bn programme, we are carrying out measures to improve the thermal insulation of our Council homes. This has been an integral part of our Housing Strategy to reduce heat loss, reduce fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions.</p> <p>The following thermal improvements to the fabric of our Council homes has been undertaken to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7,642nr. homes fitted with external wall insulation to reduce heat loss through walls • 13,520nr. Homes fitted with double glazed and draught sealed windows and doors • Over 12,000nr homes have been equipped with high efficiency combi type gas boilers and a further 500 sheltered properties benefitting from the installation of communal heating systems. As mentioned in the meeting, we have been invited by Welsh Government to trial hybrid heating systems which combine air source heat pumps with conventional heating. • Homes with accessible attic space have been fitted with loft insulation. • The Council is working towards meeting the target set by Welsh Government in social housing which is to reach a SAP level of 65 in all Council homes by 2020. The current average in Swansea is a SAP rating of 66 which has been reached through the WHQS programme. <p>Significant retrofitting schemes are planned from 2021 to 2030, in line with Welsh Government targets, to upgrade the existing fabric of Council homes and to use renewable technologies, wherever possible, to reduce carbon emissions in Council homes and buildings.</p> <p>The Council is working with the Welsh Government and Welsh School of Architecture on pilot schemes to test retrofit solutions to achieve very high performing energy efficient homes. We are nearing completion on trialling a Homes as Power Station project which aims to provide a retrofit solution for generating and storing the vast majority of energy needs for heating and hot water.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing how significant energy efficiency gains to</p>
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the existing housing stock can be made on a larger scale to meet the emerging policy ambitions for decarbonisation that the Council shares with Welsh Government.

In addition to upgrading our Council homes, we are also seeking wherever possible to utilise ReFit funding to introduce renewable technologies on our Council buildings, to maximise energy efficiency and reduce our carbon emissions. The Council has also supported the establishment of the Swansea Community Energy and Enterprise Scheme (SCEES) which saw solar panel installations on 9 schools and one care home.

Swansea Council, in light of our declaration of a Climate Emergency, will continue to maximise every opportunity available to us in order to access grants and funding to continue to build on our current programme and progress to date.

2.

Peter Anderson

Public Questions - In relation to Minute 78 “Amendments to the Constitution”

“In light of Climate Change now being included under the remit of the Equalities & Future Generations Policy Development Committee, can someone explain - what are the Council's top priorities for tackling climate change to meet the needs of future generations and what plans are being made to implement them”

Response of the Leader

Council on the 27th June declared a climate emergency the details of which will be contained in the published minutes.

Officers and members have begun working on the response to the Motion to build on the excellent work the council already undertakes to contribute to this crucial agenda. The proposal to amend one of the Policy Development Committees to specifically include the response to the Climate Change Emergency NoM will allow appropriate attention to be given and its next meeting on the 22nd October has placed this on the its agenda to develop its action plan including the drafting of a climate change charter.

Can I also reiterate the proactive actions that the council currently takes as it is envisaged the PDC will build on these areas as part of its work plan

- The City & County of Swansea Pension Fund is one of the first Pension Fund's in the UK to adopt an Environmental, Social & Governance policy which commits the pension fund to reduce its already low exposure to carbon based fossil fuel investments by up to 50% over the next 4 years. In doing so, it accepts that investing in new green energy, infrastructure and socially responsible investments offers the best sustainable financial return for members

of the pension fund over the long term. Progress is reported on an annual basis.

- Changing 21,053 street lights to LED, reducing CO2 year on year by 2,198,608.49kg.
- Delivering an annual Clean Air Roadshow to stimulate public uptake in electric vehicles and promote improving air quality.
- Delivering insulation and energy efficiency measures to benefit tenants of our council housing.
- Promoting Welsh & UK Government campaigns and programmes to increase energy efficiency amongst private tenants and home owners, reducing fuel poverty and reducing emissions.
- Campaigning for the electrification of the railway line from Swansea to London.
- Progressing work towards a world-leading Tidal Lagoon, supporting community-owned renewable energy schemes, like SCEES, to deliver clean energy and benefit local schools and community buildings.
- Working with others nationally to urge Welsh Government to develop electric car charging infrastructure.
- Being leaders of good practice in Wales through having Sustainable Development policies and approaches pre-dating the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.
- Recently incorporating care for the natural environment into our corporate plan as a new priority, recognizing the hugely important contribution made by the extensive work of our Nature Conservation Team.
- Building the first council housing in a generation here in Swansea to Passivhaus standard, and begun building new council housing to a super-energy-efficient “Swansea Standard” that will enable all components to be procured locally and reducing emissions using solar battery storage and air source heat pumps.
- Using innovation in construction for flagship projects such as Pentrehafod School, showcasing waste minimization and sustainability.
- Winning investment for innovative green technology, such as “Homes as Power Stations”, as part of the City Region Deal.
- Continuing to seek opportunities to add to our corporate fleet of Electric Vehicles, which is already the largest in Wales.
- Continuing to deliver on our Carbon Reduction strategy: 42% reduction in emissions since our baseline year.
- Securing funding for a vast increase in Active Travel (walking and cycling) routes throughout the county and supported Swansea University’s community cycle scheme.
- Becoming an Anti-Fracking Local Authority in 2016, having passed a motion to “oppose any unconventional gas development (fracking)” which also committed us to working towards being a fossil fuel free local authority by 2025.

- Implementing agile working so that our workforce may reduce unnecessary travel.
- Developing local procurement practices to reduce our carbon footprint.
- In Education, we are early joiners of the international EcoSchools programmes which encourages schools to promote recycling and reduce energy and water consumption.
- Encourage our Foundation Phase learning pupils to learn outdoors ensuring a respect for nature, biodiversity and eco-systems.
- At KS4, developing partnerships with our Universities to establish STEM workshops including the impact of climate change.

I trust this response reassures you as to the Council's progress on this important agenda.

3. **Councillor P M Black**

In relation to Minute 73 "Progress Towards Meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Referred to Paragraph 5.8 of the report and asked for a breakdown of the reasons for the 4,734 Properties within an Acceptable Fail in relation to Energy Rating.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Service Transformation

The WHQS energy rating requires homes to have 'SAP' score of 65 or more (SAP being a measure of the overall energy efficiency of a home) in order to be WHQS compliant. Due to many measures undertaken to date including, double glazing, door renewal, boiler renewal external wall and loft insulation, the majority of homes are compliant. For the 4,734 properties with a score lower than 65, the breakdown of reasons and the plans in place to address them include:

- Approximately 1,000 properties are either planned or currently in the process of receiving thermal improvements, such as external wall insulation and which will be complete by WHQS deadline of the end of 2020.
- There are properties which have very recently received thermal improvements but the revised energy assessments were not complete at the time of reporting WHQS compliance, however, these will be captured in the next round of reporting.
- The Housing Service is undertaking an exercise which will ensure historical energy ratings reflect improvements completed after the rating was undertaken. It is expected this should improve approximately 2,000 energy ratings.
- There are a small number of properties in areas where there is no mains gas supply and therefore rely on coal, oil, or liquid petroleum gas (LPG) which results in the SAP score being low. The Council is

	<p>exploring how renewable technologies can improve the overall energy rating in these homes and is in the process of developing and delivering schemes in Felindre, Craig Cefn Parc and Garnswllt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finally there are some homes where the tenant has declined to receive energy improvement measures such as new gas boilers and wall insulation. Welsh Government's guidelines for reporting WHQS compliance recognise tenants have the right to decline such works and allows local authorities to report these as acceptable fails, 'tenants' choice'. In these cases, the Council continues to make these improvements available in the event tenants' circumstances change and they would like to take up the option of receiving these improvements.
4.	<p>Councillor E W Fitzgerald</p> <p>In relation to Minute 80 – “Councillor Questions” – Question 3</p> <p>“Are you aware of the concerns relating to the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and the concerns relating to the fact that it is they that provide the guidance”</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management</p> <p>Experts in PHE Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE) are aware of various comments from individuals and groups about the advice from official bodies on the health effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs). This includes the comments in the November 2018 presentation by Dr Sarah Starkey. They have confirmed that these comments do not change PHE's current position that while there may be a small increase in radio waves when 5G is added to an existing network or in a new area, the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines and as such there should be no consequences for public health.</p> <p>A summary of PHE advice on radio waves can be accessed in the following link: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/electromagnetic-fields#radio-waves</p> <p>In formulating its advice, PHE considers the whole range of the available evidence and views on electromagnetic fields and gives greater weight to documents produced by the officially mandated and authoritative bodies that use rigorous review processes and base their advice on the entire range of scientific information available.</p>