



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
Programme Planning & Delivery Manager
More Homes Development Manager
Director of Place
Head of Housing & Public Health
Democratic Services Officer

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.

The Cabinet Member stated that the WQHS had 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.

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 commenced post 2025. The aim was to prioritise the remainder of properties that have not been upgraded. Whilst doing those properties PV panels and storage would be integrated. Low carbon heating solutions would 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 would be approved in the next 2-3 months by the UK and Welsh Government and our scheme would be part of that deal.
- 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.
- Whilst acknowledging the HRA is complex and business plan is very intricate it 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 WQHS 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.
- In terms of apprenticeships, 17 have been recruited this year with a total of 76 across all disciplines. The recruitment process had not solely been in connect with construction in terms of WQHS but is also connected to the education capital programme. Whilst a trade skills gap does exist, progress is being made to 'grow' our own talent. In addition to apprenticeships, the Council, housing associations and private developers employ unemployed individuals within communities. Current staff are trained to ensure there are appropriate numbers of staff to install and maintain the equipment in these properties thus creating and retaining 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 had 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.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm

Chair