

# Audit Wales Report - Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030

## Swansea Council Response December 2022

### Background

The Auditor General has committed to an ongoing programme of work on climate change. Their report 'Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030' is their first piece of work looking at decarbonisation in 48 larger public sector bodies.

Swansea Council responded to a call for evidence to inform the report in November 2021. Lead officers also met in person to discuss some subjects in more detail, prior to the report being published in July 2022.

Audit Wales concluded that there is *“uncertainty that the ambition for a net zero public sector will be met.”* and the report calls for *“stronger public sector leadership on reducing carbon emissions in Wales”*

*Considerable activity is taking place to reduce carbon emissions. However, public bodies need to increase their pace of activity amid clear uncertainty about whether they will achieve the collective ambition to have net zero carbon emissions by 2030. There are real barriers that public bodies need to address, and decarbonisation needs to be put at the heart of their day-to-day activities.*

In the report, the Auditor General makes the following five calls for action from public bodies:

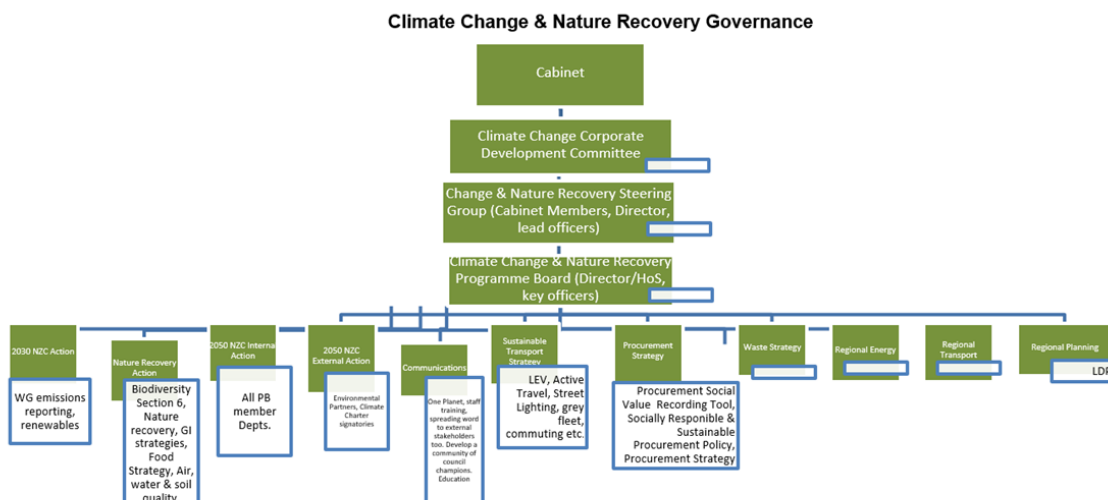
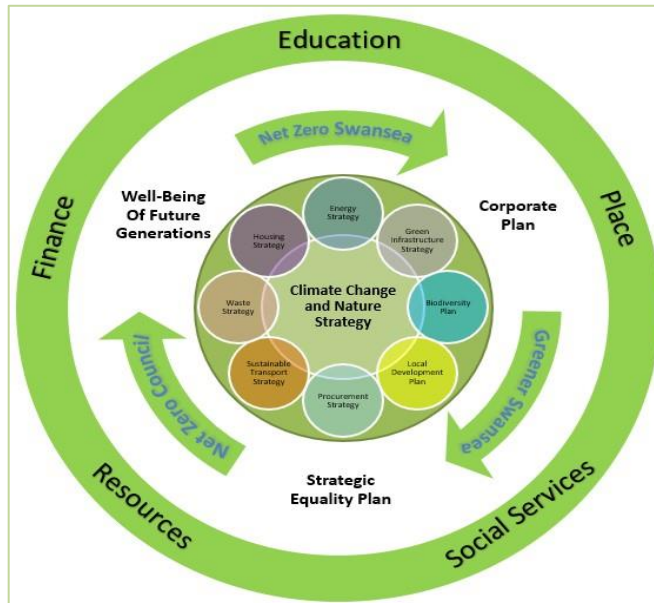
- Strengthen your leadership and demonstrate your collective responsibility through effective collaboration;
- Clarify your strategic direction and increase your pace of implementation;
- Get to grips with the finances you need;
- Know your skills gaps and increase your capacity; and
- Improve data quality and monitoring to support your decision making.

### Response

**Strengthen your leadership and demonstrate your collective responsibility through effective collaboration.**

- New Well-being objective created in the corporate plan – Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change demonstrates full commitment to the subject.

- The Cabinet member for Service Transformation and the Cabinet member for Corporate Services and Performance (our two Deputy Leaders) both chair the Climate Change and Nature Recovery Steering Group.
- Leader/Cabinet member WLGA Climate leadership training attended by senior officers. New on line training package due for launch in the New Year suitable for councillors and officers. Also to be shared regionally as best practice.
- New Climate Change Corporate Delivery Committee established to focus on new strategy and policy.
- Nature Recovery and Climate Change governance reflected below.



November 2022

- South West Wales Economic Delivery Plan reflects collaboration on this agenda.
- Regional energy agenda via Earth Programme
- WLGA supporting masterclasses to share good practice across all Welsh public bodies.
- Swansea Council already has a dozen signatories to the Climate Change and Nature Action Charter who will help develop the Net Zero Swansea strategy/agenda, these include health board, fire, police services, universities, NRW, Coastal Housing etc.
- Working with the PSB and the Working with Nature sub group to collaboratively drive the Net Zero Swansea 2050 agenda.
- Working with BID and the economic delivery team to support small local businesses.
- Working with schools on this agenda.
- Recently established a new Environmental partner procurement framework. Recently presented 'partnership working' to WLGA forum and commended for projects being undertaken in Swansea.
- Working with The Swansea Environment Centre to run an Energy Awareness Hub to help citizens during the energy crisis. Additional funding secured through to March 2023.
- Gained Bronze One Planet Standard accreditation in November 2022.

### **Clarify your strategic direction and increase your pace of implementation**

- Three years of emissions now successfully submitted to Welsh Government.
- A costed delivery plan presented and approved by Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> December.
- Collaborate with climate signatories to develop action towards delivering the Swansea wide 2050 target.
- Utilise new environmental partners to undertake ground work in 222-23, establish clear picture of what's happening across Swansea from a community perspective.
- Climate Pledge wall introduced with 150 plus signed up.
- Citizen survey undertaken March 21 with over 1000 responses. Plan to repeat in spring 2023. The main message was to 'go faster, go further' which continues to be our ambition.

### **Get to grips with the finances you need**

- The ability and the costs of being able to deliver NZ have been set out in a report to Cabinet 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022.
- Due to the stance taken on renewables within WG guidance it is expected that to meet the requirements as currently set out will be likely unachievable and almost certainly unaffordable without significant subsidy. There is a need for further dialogue with WG regarding delivery timeframe and how the public sector will be funded to reach the standard we all need to achieve.

## **Know your skills gaps and increase your capacity**

- Skills gaps have mainly been identified in operational and technical fields. Examples include technical design, drainage, ecologists, trades (new technologies), and carbon reduction.
- Alongside continuing to recruit externally in a very limited, competitive market, strategies are also in place to 'grow our own' and work more closely with the local universities to try and bridge the skills gaps.
- Working with Gower College to retrain current staff in new technologies.
- Teams will seek opportunity of recent funding – 'SBCD skills and talent'
- There has been Welsh Government support to drive regional working.
- The council will also explore the opportunity for funding via the CJC mechanism as part of the delivery of the regional energy strategy.

## **Improve data quality and monitoring to support your decision making**

- Currently operational officers are working as a team to collate all required WG reporting data and this has worked extremely well to date, but recognising we will need to drill down to the finer detail going forward a new Carbon Reduction Project Manager has been appointed in December 2022, to work alongside officers to analyse and monitor our data going forward.
- Swansea will be using 'Team Sigma' to start collating data electronically offering monitoring and reporting facilities. Maybe WG should consider standard on line reporting format going forward to help improve consistency?
- We will commence the more detailed emissions breakdown, newly requested by WG in the social care sector, in readiness for next year's reporting.

## **Conclusion**

Swansea Council has made a commitment to delivering on nature recovery and climate change as per the new corporate plan wellbeing objective 2022-2027. The challenge now is to ensure adequate skilled resource and funds are made available to ensure effective delivery. As it stands, the campaign is likely to need more time and we are not in a position to fully fund the programme from Council budgets.