



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel - Climate Change and Nature**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Wednesday, 8 March 2023 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor H Lawson (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C M J Evans
W G Thomas
S E Keeton

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
O G James
M W Locke

Councillor(s)

J A Hale
M H Jones
B J Rowlands

Other Attendees

David Hopkins
Paul Lewis

Cabinet Member for Corporate Service and Performance
Professor Emeritus, Swansea University Medical School

Officer(s)

Stuart Davies
Liz Jordan
Paul Meller
Carol Morgan
Tom Price
Mike Sweeney
Mark Wade

Head of Highways & Transportation
Scrutiny Officer
Natural Environment Section Manager
Head of Housing & Public Health
Team Leader - Pollution Control
Team Leader, Highways and Transportation
Director of Place

Apologies for Absence

Other Attendee(s): Cllr A H Stevens

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Chris Evans declared a personal interest in item 7.

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

No declarations were received.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting on 10 January 2023 as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Public Question Time

No questions were received.

5 Nature Conservation - Project Updates

Paul Meller, Natural Environment Section Manager updated the Panel and confirmed that all recommendations from the scrutiny inquiry in 2019 are now complete or part of other projects.

Discussion Points:

- Panel queried if three granted funded temporary posts are still running. Heard only received grant funding for one year. Not being continued after June 2023 as no alternative funding has been found.
- Panel requested confirmation of where in Swansea poly tunnel for community growing has been installed. [Officers confirmed following the meeting that it is within the grounds of Friends of the Young Disabled building, Gordon Moor Centre at Cwmbwrla.]
- Report mentions developing maps and pack for 'Wild about your ward' project and so far schemes are being prepared for Townhill and Morryston. Heard this work is linked to grant funding and there will be no resources to continue after June.
- Panel asked what the priorities are between now and June in terms of work being carried out with remaining time and capacity for this particular grant. Officers advised the remaining time will be spent on some ongoing projects in Townhill and Morryston.
- Panel mentioned that Environment Centre is struggling for resource to continue and really needs support.
- Panel asked for confirmation that environmental links have been made within all school governing bodies to receive support for biodiversity activities and initiatives. Heard have good contacts with some schools but not all schools. Officers agreed to provide generic nature conservation link which schools/governors can use to get involved.

Actions:

- Link to be provided for schools/governors to get support for school biodiversity activities and initiatives.

6 Air Quality Management

Tom Price, Team Leader Pollution Control attended to brief the Panel. Paul Lewis, Professor Emeritus at Swansea University Medical School was also present.

Discussion Points:

- Delay in submission of Annual Progress Report to Welsh Government. Will shortly be submitting Report for last three years and will then circulate to the Panel. Draft conclusions reached suggest the Council is currently compliant.
- Panel queried if any legislation is being brought in in Wales regarding wood burning stoves. Informed in Wales it is part of the Clean Air Bill the WG is

working on. Professor Lewis presented a Cross Party Group for Clean Air Act to Assembly Members recently and will share this presentation with the Panel.

- Panel queried if garden bonfires will be included in the Clean Air Act and was informed existing powers are in place under statutory nuisance provisions in the Environmental Protection Act. Outdoor burning is also being considered for the Clear Air Act in terms of increased regulation. Fireworks will not be included in the Clean Air Bill consultation but there has been separate consultation regarding fireworks and this will be circulated to the Panel.
- Panel concerned about air quality around schools and asked if every school in the County has been checked to ensure they are safe. Informed the Council monitors air quality at some schools and is currently compliant across Swansea.
- Panel heard schools are a focus for WG. Exposure outside schools is a problem and more evidence is needed for Wales in terms of exposure levels and the health impacts on children.
- Panel informed Routes to School works with schools providing ideas to stop parents bringing children to school. Routes children take to get to school also needs to be considered. There is potential for future application to a WG support grant to produce a product for safe routes to school.
- Panel queried how sensitive monitoring of particulate matter is currently and how a school like Oystermouth, which is mostly concrete, can be 'greened up'. Informed intervention currently underway at the school will test boundary and in the yard particulate matter concentration and install a trial green screen along railing area. It is becoming much easier to monitor PM2.5 on lower cost sensors so can have wide distribution of monitors.
- Panel discussed view that 20mph speed limit will increase potential for pollution, same as speed humps and vehicles waiting to turn right at lights. Informed studies on whether speed humps increased or reduced pollution were unclear and there is little evidence on effect on air quality of 20mph speed limits but the little evidence there is suggests driving at 20mph generally leads to improvement in terms of PM2.5. Key thing is to get less breaking and tyre wear at 20mph.
- Panel queried if main cause of idling of vehicles outside schools is parents dropping off children and if it would be worth getting information out to schools to try and educate parents on not doing this. Heard there is legislation for statutory idling offences, and it is written into bus contracts for school transport provision. However, idling outside schools is not just caused by parents.

Actions:

- Annual Progress Report to be circulated to Panel once submitted to Welsh Government.
- Professor Lewis presentation to be circulated to the Panel for information.
- WG consultation on fireworks to be circulated to the Panel.

7 Local Flood Risk Management - Annual Update

Mike Sweeney, Team Leader Highways and Transportation updated the Panel on this issue including roles and duties of the Council in this area.

Discussion Points:

- Council currently needs to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and combine this with a Flood Risk Management Plan.
- Panel requested an update on progress with business cases for Welsh Government grant supported schemes awarded to flood affected areas. Informed taking longer to complete than anticipated. Once complete they will be compared against other schemes in Wales to decide which ones will be taken forward based on factors against risk to property.
- Panel queried if Swansea is more at risk of flooding than other parts of Wales and heard flood risk is a challenge for all local authorities across Wales and need to plan ahead to mitigate against the effects of climate change.
- Panel asked about the Blackpill scheme and if Dwr Cymru's objection to the plan had been rectified. Informed discussions are taking place. Panel also queried if any work was scheduled to keep the outflows clear at Blackpill as there was an issue with sand blocking them. Heard the Department is aware the outflow tends to block with sand, they have cleared it in the past and will do so again if it needs doing.
- Panel mentioned new houses being built in Penllergaer area and queried if there will be regular checks in future on the issue of further surface water being discharged into a system which has had significant challenges already. Informed that when the Council assesses planning applications on larger scale developments it uses a national standard so they do not impose flood risk to existing infrastructure. They confirmed they will continue to monitor the Penllergaer situation going forward.
- Panel queried what plans are in place to improve older infrastructure given current challenges. Informed asset data is collected which the Department thinks is important to flood risk, checking on its condition, and if have a flood event, to try and understand the cause of it, and, if it is down to capacity of the system, they take further steps to find a solution.
- Panel asked about effect of gardens being paved over or tarmacked, astro turf and resin drives on run off and if there are any plans to bring in legislation to make people require planning to do it. Heard there is currently no legislation to support intervention. On new developments trying to get most of water to go to ground if possible. If not, look at attenuation and storing water on developments, so there are ways to reduce run off for new applications but not older developments.
- Panel feels it would be useful to know what attenuation ponds are and have some understanding of SUDS and its impact on new developments. Discussed a training package currently being put in place on SUDS which it would be useful for Panel Members to attend. Further discussion on this to take place outside of meeting.

Actions:

- Information on SUDS training to be provided to Panel Members.

8 Work Programme 2022-23

Panel considered the work programme and noted items for the next meeting.

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Cont'd

The meeting ended at 11.35 am