



To:
**Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member
for Service Transformation**

**Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet Member
for Corporate Service and Performance**

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

Scrutiny

*Scrutiny Office
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrochol:*

01792 637314

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

*Date
Dyddiad:*

15 May 2023

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

Summary: This is a letter from the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel to the relevant Cabinet Members following the meeting of the Panel on 2 May 2023. It covers Climate Change and Corporate Priorities/Policy Commitments.

Dear Cllr Lewis and Cllr Hopkins

The Panel met on 2 May 2023 and received an update on Climate change including Green Vehicle Adoption and discussed Achievement against Corporate Priorities/Objectives/Policy Commitments.

We would like to thank you, Geoff Bacon, Mark Barrow and Rachel Lewis for attending to present the items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

Climate Change Update

We heard the Council faces a number of challenges in relation to Green Vehicle Adoption. The Welsh Government and UK Government have tight targets which must be met in terms of low emission vehicles.

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SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

www.swansea.gov.uk / www.abertawe.gov.uk

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We were pleased to hear Swansea Council is well ahead of other councils in Wales in terms of numbers of battery electric/hybrid vehicles in the fleet.

We noted vehicles are just one piece of the puzzle in relation to climate change and nature recovery and that there is a much bigger picture when it comes to the 2030 and 2050 targets that the Council is trying to solve. Cabinet Member Andrea Lewis stated the Council does not have the budget to carry out many things in relation to climate change and nature recovery, including green vehicle adoption, and will have to lobby hard both the Welsh Government and UK Government for the resources it needs to meet the targets.

We queried if greening the fleet was the best use of any money that becomes available and if this has been modelled. We feel that it may be a false economy to prioritise new electric vehicles if the cost of resource then increases, and asked if the Council would be better off prioritising, for example, insulating schools, installing solar panels on school roofs etc. We heard that in terms of efficiencies, the department does not want to make false economies but will change to electric where it can. However, it is driven by the ambitions of Welsh Government and the Council. We were informed that 10% of the modelling has been done but the remaining 90% will be a real challenge in terms of service delivery.

In relation to downsizing vehicles, we wanted to know if this would result in staff having to come back to the depot more to pick up stores, this would not be efficient or productive. We heard all Council vehicles are deployed with telematics which has driven efficiency and the smaller vans will minimise the opportunity for excess load. They will still be able to carry everything they need, but it will stop them carrying the 'just in case' stuff.

We queried where the Council's energy comes from as we need to be using renewable energy to charge up electric vehicles. We were pleased to hear the Council is using 100% renewable sources for its electricity so is currently 100% green, but were informed this cannot be guaranteed going forward, as it depends on the markets and the Council is in a national procurement for energy with other councils.

We queried if the Council has got a battery recycling policy in place and were informed it does not have one at the moment, as the Council's electric vehicles are 5 to 7 years old, so you have not reached the issue of renewing batteries. Also, the electric vehicles the Council has currently are leased so it's the suppliers who have the obligation in terms of disposal. The Council will need to become more aware of this if it begins purchasing electric vehicles to ensure the full supply chain is sustainable going forward.

We discussed how it is better to keep the current vehicles for as long as possible rather than just replacing them with electric, and you can keep an eye on new markets at the same time.

We expressed concern about how some renewable energy is achieved, for example wind turbines, and if damage is being done to other parts of the environment to achieve renewable outcomes. We heard major solar farms, major wind turbines etc are outside of the Council's control, however, within the Council's control you are looking at using renewable energies wherever possible.

We queried how much more expensive electric vehicles are in comparison to diesel and heard lighter commercial are 25-30% more expensive, heavy goods are 100-150% more expensive but it is hoped the cost of vehicles will come down in price through economies of scale.

We wanted to know if the weight of vehicles is something that needs to be considered as far as roads are concerned and heard electric vehicles are heavier and this will impact on the road network, car parks and bridges etc longer term as more people transition to electric. This is a concern.

The report proposes that in future the Panel receives an annual update on Climate Change. The next update will be scheduled in the Panel's work programme for May/June 2024.

Achievement against Corporate Priorities/Objectives/Policy Commitments

We noted that this is a huge area spanning a number of portfolios.

We heard the report gives some examples of specific activities to demonstrate action going forward. We were informed the Council is trying to do as much as it can in terms of development, developing policies, working with regional partners, doing some early activities and early outcomes where it has got them, with limited resources and in a worsening financial climate.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, however in this instance, a formal written response is not required.

Yours sincerely

HANNAH LAWSON
CONVENER, CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURE SCRUTINY PANEL
CLLR.HANNAH.LAWSON@SWANSEA.GOV.UK