

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2022

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2022

“ PROJECT ZERO – UPDATE, RESOURCES, EVIDENCE AND REPORTING  
(REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 was presented by Head of Policy & Business Transformation for the Committee's consideration, which set out the findings in the carbon data report submitted to Welsh Government, proposals for the approach to the use of financial resources associated with tackling climate change and for reporting progress in delivering Project Zero, which was the Council's response to the declaration of a climate emergency.

The key points raise included:

- In terms of the Council's carbon footprint, the Welsh Government (WG) undertook a measurement exercise across public sector bodies and used 2019/20 as the baseline, due to the potential impact of the pandemic on emissions in 2020/21 and the data was submitted to WG in the autumn of last year and was currently being interpreted by WG with the expectation that a draft report about public sector carbon emissions would be produced shortly.
- As part of this exercise, the Council looked at the three different scopes of carbon emissions, looking at both direct and indirect use of carbon emitting services. Within scope one and scope two these encompassed energy use within Council owned buildings, locations under the Council's direct control and then scope three, which involved carbon emissions within the supply chain. 80% of the Council's emissions were contained within scope three around the goods and services that it purchased. This information would help inform the future priorities for Project Zero and to help focus not just on the direct energy consumption by Council facilities but also indirectly through its supply chains.
- The Council would be looking with interest at the findings from all Wales information that the WG provided, and the Council would also be submitting a further response to the data request in June of this year.
- In terms of funding, the report set out a series of different funding arrangements and proposals for how those funding arrangements could be made such as the green infrastructure and climate change reserve, which stood at £650,000, and should be identified as a capital reserve as well as being ring fenced as match funding for grant funded infrastructure schemes that would help deliver a step change towards meeting the Council's 2030 zero target. There was also the Project Zero Reserve (£500k) to be used to fund revenue type costs such as procuring expert advice, analysis and to fund feasibility and due diligence costs that were required to leverage grant funding

(subject to approval by the Project Zero Board and the Head of Finance). Also of note, was the Carbon Vehicles Reserve (£215k) to be used to achieve electrification of the Council's fleet of vehicles.

- The Housing Business Plan was setting out almost £75m over the next 30 years for the decarbonisation of the Council's existing and future housing stock.
- WG had also given indicative budgets for a three-year period, with additional funding in years two and three of £20m in each year ringfenced for decarbonisation across Wales and additional Schools' Asset Renewal Capital Funding awarded in 2021/22.
- In terms of reporting, it was proposed that progress be reported through Cabinet and Committees three times a year in June, October and February. Furthermore, the need had been identified for a new section to be inserted into committee reports around climate change and nature implications for Member's consideration and focus, to be implemented following the Annual Meeting of the Council this year.
- A Communications Plan would need to be implemented as part of Project Zero, i.e., the use of social media, the use of Project Zero insignia by schools and other public bodies as well as branding and information on the project on physical assets, i.e. within country parks.
- Key areas of progress for Project Zero were highlighted i.e. the consultation on the Local Development Plan and how supplementary planning guidance would be developed, the Green Infrastructure Plan to be consulted upon in Summer 2022, the 10 year Waste Management Business Plan would be going to Cabinet, as well as the development of a Local Area Energy Plan, the agreement of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Cabinet for an energy strategy, and the outline proposals at Aberthaw i.e. for alternative power generation or digital infrastructure.
- The Council had also recently undertaken with consultants to look at the carbon emissions across the Vale of the Glamorgan as a county in order to understand the size and scale of the challenge to reach the 2050 goal for a net zero Wales.

Following the presentation of the report, the subsequent comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Carroll referred to global uncertainty at present around energy supply and prices (i.e. due to the conflict in Ukraine) and the need for the United Kingdom as a whole and Western Europe even more so to reduce reliance on oil and gas (such as from Russia). This would be a complicated and challenging process including supply chains, the cost of 'green' technologies and the impact of prices on related resources, i.e. metals on battery / electric technologies. He asked whether any impact assessment or analysis had been undertaken by the Council or others on the potential impact of the conflict in Ukraine and other factors on achieving net zero. It was explained that the current issues and conflict were discussed at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) concerning refugee resettlement and the potential impacts on Council services and residents' cost of living. A follow up meeting with Council Officers on these issues would be happening in the near future,

and the impact on the Council's decarbonisation programme would also be considered, with the possibility of a report to come on this in due course.

- Councillor Dr Johnson referred to the large percentage of carbon emissions in the Council's supply chain and the importance of the Council as an 'anchor' institution and the ability to influence practices both in terms of its procurement locally and the wider supply chain as well as setting best practice. This potentially could take time and therefore setting a baseline for the Project Zero data may not be achievable in the near future. He also was looking for assurance that the processes and plans for Project Zero would be adhered to by all parts of the Council.
- Councillor Sivagnanam echoed the comments on the Council's supply chain emissions and asked what the Council was doing differently in terms of its procurement of other services and to ensure that those services and those providers were in with this project.
- In response to the queries above on supply chain (scope 3) emissions, the Head of Policy & Business Transformation stated that a number of things were being undertaken in order to see significant pace on this work. The data return made it possible for the Council to identify the different areas of the Council's business which were procuring different supplies and services and to have notional emissions indications against each of those and the Project Board for Project Zero had requested that the Senior Responsible Officers who were there to deliver these commitments within the project undertake a procurement challenge over the next three months and to look at how to decarbonise these goods and services and to actively seek out alternatives. Also, to look at supporting service providers to help reduce their carbon emissions i.e. sharing the Council's electric vehicles with domiciliary carers and to further look at decarbonising schools.
- The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration told the Committee that although a complex area, Project Zero and the work around it was a case study of how if you felt passionately about things, you could actually affect change in the way that the Council operates, such as delivering a net zero carbon school, South Point Primary School in Rhoose. As with the process overall, this had involved learning and adapting green technologies and methods in order to allow for children going in and out of the buildings, etc, with the next big challenge to retrofit older schools in order to become net zero carbon. She commended the work done by Council officers in taking forward Project Zero. In terms of costs, these had already been increasing even before Ukraine and the council still had to deliver services, etc. and be ambitious despite this rise and there was the potential for further WG funding such as with retrofitting.
- The Chair felt there should be more emphasis on producing and sourcing food locally within the Vale of Glamorgan in order to reduce carbon emissions from importing food externally, on insulating public and other types of building in order to reduce carbon emissions and to help reduce fuel consumption / costs and for the Council to lobby Welsh Government and UK Government regarding procurement practices and policies, in order to work towards more carbon neutral solutions. It was explained that the Climate Change Challenge Plan already had commitments to locally produced food and a reduction in food miles. The point on insulation would be taken back to Property Services and on lobbying national and UK government, this was certainly important but

also it was crucial to make decisions and take actions locally concerning procurement.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Cabinet be informed of the comments made by Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Project Zero – Update, Resources, Evidence and Reporting, namely:

- Greater emphasis on producing and sourcing food locally within the Vale of Glamorgan in order to reduce carbon emissions from importing food externally.
- Greater focus on insulating public and other types of building in order to reduce carbon emissions and to help reduce fuel consumption / costs.
- For the Council to lobby Welsh Government and UK Government regarding procurement practices and policies, in order to work towards more carbon neutral solutions.
- That the Council looks to influence practices both in terms of procurement locally and the wider supply chain, as well as setting best practice and that the Council ensures its policies and processes around Project Zero are sufficiently robust, durable and effective.

#### Reason for recommendation

In order for Cabinet to consider the comments and views of the Scrutiny Committee with reference to taking Project Zero forward.”