

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. FLEET ULTRA LOW EMISSION VEHICLE (ULEV) TRANSITION STRATEGY

Members considered a report which provided information and an update in regard to the development of the Fleet Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transition Strategy.

The report presented by the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability stated that in addition to the County Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration in February 2019 and the subsequent target of becoming a Net Zero organisation by 2030, the Welsh Government set out its expectations with regards to public sector fleets in its 2019 strategy 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales', outlining its ambitions for all new cars and light goods vehicles to be ultra-low emission by 2025 and all heavy goods vehicles by 2030.

Members noted that the Council Fleet mileage made up for 19% of its carbon footprint which was a significant proportion of the overall carbon impact. The Council's principal aim was to reduce the environmental impact of its fleet operations and to strive towards achieving the Council's vision of an optimised, sustainable decarbonised vehicle fleet by 2030. The ULEV Transition Strategy would seek to set out the strategic delivery programme to achieve these aims.

The report outlined the current situation together with a comprehensive TEEP analysis followed by the challenges which was being faced by the Council.

The following comments / observations / queries were raised:

- Expression of thanks was conveyed to the officers for an informative report. It was commented that this would be an opportunity for public service bodies to save a significant amount of money as well as the environmental and practical advantages.

It was suggested that by purchasing the electric vehicles by way of the 'Pay as you Save' model, would enable have advantages as electric vehicles could be purchased relatively cheaply, upfront, in advance via a lease scheme for 8 to 10 years. Furthermore, it was commented that electric vehicles were cheaper and easier to maintain. There were many cost advantages to having an electric fleet which would be realised in the long term.

It was advised not to charge the vehicles at peak times/rates. It was suggested that the Authority negotiated a 'time of use tariff', overnight being the most cost-effective time. In addition, training would need to be provided along with charging etiquette to ensure a consistent and cost-effective approach.

The Cabinet Member stated that the transportation team were in continued communication with experts who provide help, advice and guidance. The Head of Environmental Infrastructure added that they were currently looking to provide a robust, sustainable and affordable transition plan for the Council which would include both the vehicle and the electric vehicle charging infrastructure around the County. The plan would also include the charging etiquette, the training and the maintenance training. It was recognised that the transition to electric vehicles was a long-term plan, however a significant step had been made to introduce the ULEV's and it was key to ensure that the transition would be sustainable in the long term.

- Concerns were raised in regard to the current budget pressures and the extra cost burdens that this could present starting with purchasing electric vehicles at 20 – 30% at least more than standard vehicles, which would be a significant cost for a fleet.

Further concerns regarding the insurance costs which could present at 30% more due to the disposal of lithium batteries, and the extra cost to the Council in regard to electric usage and costs of servicing and maintenance as many garages are not up equipped to maintain electric vehicles.

The Cabinet Member, in response to the concerns stated that moving forward would require a considerable amount of research and consider all available economic models. In terms of the maintenance of electric vehicles it was acknowledged that an upskilling would be necessary to ensure that adequate knowledge was available to carry out vehicle maintenance. The Head of Environmental Infrastructure provided assurances that the plan would ensure that the fleet was affordable long term together with considerations in regard to the number of required vehicle on the fleet, greater utilisation and sharing of vehicles across services to minimise the number of vehicles. This would be coupled with evaluations on how the Council could continue to decarbonise in an affordable manner. In terms of skill sets in Carmarthenshire for maintaining electric vehicles, it was reported that the transportation department was working with Coleg Sir Gâr's Green Skills Academy in developing a prospectus for Carmarthenshire and one of the elements was electric vehicle maintenance.

In respect of battery disposal, the Head of Environmental Infrastructure reported that conversations were taking place at a National Level with the 22 other Local Authorities in Wales considering the problematic waste materials which includes batteries.

- Reference was made to the box providing EVCI Site Details and rapid chargers. It was asked if the Council's electric chargers could be made available to the public? The Head of Environmental Infrastructure explained that to avoid a failure in service, Council owned chargers must remain a priority for the fleet by being available at all times. Unfettered access to Council depots with restricted access would pose a security challenge and therefore was not an option. However, it was highlighted that chargers were available to the public in locations such as leisure centres as well as the car park at Llandovery.

It was reported that a gap analysis would be undertaken in respect of the charging infrastructure to improve access to electric charging throughout Carmarthenshire.

- Reference was made to paragraph 3.12 ‘...which will see an increase in the proportion of EV fleet from 1.8% to 8% by 31st March 2024.’ It was asked if there was an update covering the recent weeks, the Head of Environmental Infrastructure reported that in 3 weeks there had not been any further fleet purchases/deliveries therefore the figure remained at 8%.
- It was asked if there was any scope to utilise solar panels to charge the electric fleet? In response, the Head of Environmental Infrastructure stated that there were interdependencies across multiple departments. It was reported that the decarbonisation of the Council’s building stock was a priority and whilst investing in renewable energy facilities and solar panels was being considered to power buildings it was consideration into the additional capacity to charge vehicles was also being explored at present.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Fleet Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (ULEV) Transition Strategy be received.

5. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ASSET ASSESSMENTS

[Note: Councillor Gareth Thomas and Councillor Arwel Davies, having earlier declared an interest in this item, remained in the meeting but did not participate in the consideration and did not vote on this item].

The Committee received for consideration a report which provided the forthcoming Public Rights of Way (PROW) asset assessment and included a rationale for the assessment, details of how it would be delivered, the benefits and the risks. The Committee was informed that this topic fell under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability who proceeded to present the report.

It was reported that the PROW network in Carmarthenshire exceeded 2500km with circa 3176 individually recorded routes across all 72 Town and Community Councils. The completion of an asset assessment would provide a complete record of the local Authority’s PROW assets across the whole network.

The following comments / observations / queries were raised:

- It was asked if there was any scope to work in partnership with Town and Community Councils? The Countryside Access Manager explained that the Town and Community Council maintenance programme ended was because only a few Town and Community Councils were being financially supported to undertake work on the Authority and following a calculation it was ascertained that should more Town and Community Councils join the scheme it would not be possible for the Authority to continue to financially support a potential 72 Councils across Carmarthenshire. In acknowledging the unfair system, it was moved to in-house, however it was reported that there were difficulties and a following a further review the Authority was working with several Town and Community Councils but utilising more of

their own precept to cover the work. It was reported that the longer-term approach would be to work in partnership with Town and Community Councils but on a voluntary basis. A volunteer workforce had been established and consisted of over 100 volunteers to date and would work in partnership with the Authority to undertake maintenance work on behalf of the Authority. A promotion of the volunteer scheme had been undertaken by way of social media, correspondence to all Town and Community Councils and press releases. Further volunteer recruitment drives would be undertaken later in the year.

It was commented that grass cutting should be included in the partnership working with Town and Community Councils.

It was suggested that Town and Community Councils should have an input in what part of the network is prioritised for maintenance. The Countryside Access Officer explained that all Town and Community Councils were approached when the Network Hierarchy was established where each Community Council was asked to select 5% of the total length of network in its area so that those routes could be prioritised as category C routes, which was deemed as fair, proportionate and deliverable. In the region of 14 Town and Community Councils responded and their selected routes were placed into category C.

It was asked how would the assessments help with PROW's that had not been looked at for many years and or had legal issues attributed to them? The Countryside Access Officer stated that the asset assessments was unlikely to contribute to the resolution of any ongoing legal issues, however it may contribute to enhance the knowledge of the situation on the entire network. To be able to categorise the issues raised and be able to place a figure against the number of assets and legal issues etc all aids to contribute to a forward-looking plan and projects.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report on the Public Rights of Way Asset Assessments be received.

6. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24

Presented by the Cabinet Member for Resources, the Committee considered the financial monitoring report on the 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budget for the Place & Infrastructure and Public Protection Services for the period up to the 31st December, 2023.

It was reported that overall, the revenue budget was forecasting a £2,228k overspend to year end. The capital budget reported a forecasted net spend of £15,305k compared with a working net budget of £29,143k giving a variance of £-13,838k.

The Committee noted that in regard to the savings report, the expectation was that at year end, £982k of Managerial savings against target of £1,344k was forecasted to be delivered. In addition, £136k of Policy savings against a target of £261k was put forward for 2023/24 and was forecasted to be delivered.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- The Chair stated that he had attended the last Chair and Vice Chair of Scrutiny Forum and raised on behalf of the Committee the concerns regarding the lateness of the budget monitoring reports being presented to the Scrutiny Committee and requested for more timely reports. The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that Leader was aware of the time scales and was currently working with finance staff to come to a resolution.
- Reference was made to Appendix B – Departmental Pooled Vehicles. In highlighting the underspend of £13,000 and the associated comment ‘under-utilisation of pool vehicles’, it was asked if pool vehicles were needed and if there was scope to remove them from the fleet? The Head of Environmental Infrastructure stated that this was being considered as part of the transformation review on staff travel and pool vehicles.
- In response to a comment raised regarding the significant loss of income due to defective car parking machines, the Head of Environmental Infrastructure stated that whilst he did not have the specific timescales for repair to hand, each payment machine would have a service level agreement with provider. Further information on this would be shared with Committee Members outside of the meeting.

A further comment was raised regarding the design of the car parking payment machine in that they were not intuitive, easy to navigate and a challenge for individuals with poor eyesight. The Head of Environmental Infrastructure, in acknowledging that some individuals may experience some challenges when using the payment machine stated that in order to improve the accessibility going forward, a review on a meter would take place when the machine was due for replacement. Furthermore, Members were informed that a ‘my permit app’ was in place across all car parks in Carmarthenshire which offered a simple method of payment, however, it was again appreciated that some individuals may experience some challenges in using this method.

- Reference was made to Appendix E – Towy Valley Path. An update was requested on the comment ‘agreed land purchases and associated fees due to be completed shortly’. The Cabinet Member for Resources stated that the Council had undergone lengthy Compulsory Purchase Orders and hearings and that a report would be prepared and presented to the Committee in due course.
- In response to a query regarding slippages, the Group Accountant explained that unfinished schemes would slip into 2024/25 as notified.
- An observation was made that within Appendix E, the Re-Fit Cymru and Decarbonisation schemes had significantly missed the target spend in 2023/24. As this was a cost saving exercises it was asked if there was any value in increasing the deployment into energy efficiency, decarbonisation and Re-Fit Cymru to meet set targets.

- Reference was made to Business Support for Renewable Energy Initiatives within Appendix F. It was asked how much promotional work had taken place on the initiative? The Cabinet Member reported that a lot of promotional work had taken place however he would liaise with Media and Communications to push the information into the public domain and reach the correct audience.
- Reference was made to the introduce a second camera enforcement vehicle, Business Case prepared – Parking Services within Appendix G(ii) Savings Not on Target. In response to a concern raised in regard to the difficulties with the procurement of a second camera car the Head of Environmental Infrastructure reported that the second camera car had recently been delivered and that it was an electric vehicle.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report up to 31st December 2023 be received.

7. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 11TH MARCH 2024 AND THE RECONVENED MEETING ON 22ND MARCH 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 11th March, 2024 and the reconvened meeting on 22nd March 2024 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE