

PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor K. Madge (Chair) (In Person)

Councillors (In Person):

K. Davies	P. Cooper	D.C. Evans	T.M. Higgins
N. Lewis	B.D.J. Phillips	G.B. Thomas	

Councillors (Virtually):

S.M. Allen	S. Godfrey-Coles	T.A.J. Davies
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Also in attendance (In Person):

- Councillor A. Davies, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, Community Cohesion and Planning Policy;
- Councillor A. Vaughan Owen, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability;
- Councillor E. Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services;

Also Present (In Person):

R. Griffiths, Head of Place and Sustainability;
G. Lewis, Waste Strategy & Policy Manager;
E. Evans, Principal Democratic Services Officer;
S. Rees, Simultaneous Translator;
J. Owen, Democratic Services Officer.

Also Present (Virtually):

I. Macho, Biodiversity Officer
D. G. Baxter, Grounds and Cleansing Manager

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen, SA31 1JP and remotely: 10:00am - 11:11am

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST INCLUDING ANY PARTY WHIPS ISSUED IN RELATION TO ANY AGENDA ITEM.

There were no declarations of interest.
There were no declarations of any prohibited party whips.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that no public questions had been received.

4. WASTE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee received a report which provided a summary of the interim waste service change roll out that was implemented on 23rd January 2023.

The report, presented by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services included an update on the current provision of the waste services which served approximately 91,000 households.

It was reported that since the introduction of the interim waste service change in January 2023, the delivery was delivered by way of a:

- Weekly dry recycling [blue bags] collection;
- Three weekly collections of up to three [black] bags of Non-recyclable material-Introduction of a glass collection service to 95% of properties in Carmarthenshire for glass bottles and jars to be collected from kerbside every three weeks,;
- with food waste collection continuing to be collected weekly.

Members considered the following information which was provided within the report:

- Performance figures of the interim measure;
- Post roll-out feedback
- Overview of phase two – Waste Service Change
- Governance
- Vehicles for blueprint kerbside sort collection
- Timeline and communication

The comments/observations raised were responded to as follows:-

- Concern was raised in regard to the large amount of money being spent on this in order to meet the relevant targets. The Waste Strategy & Policy Manager explained that whilst the budget allocation had been thoroughly discussed with the Welsh Government and Authority Members, there would be cost implications in not meeting the recycling targets.
- In congratulating the increase in performance of waste reused, recycled or composted it was emphasised that it was important to remain focussed.
- The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability reported that there were big aspirations in terms of the circular economy and offered the Committee to provide more information on this. Members agreed that this would be beneficial and would be included on the Forward Work Plan as a development session.

- Reference was made to the overview of phase two of the report which stated that the operational depots at Cillefwr, Glannamman and Trostre were unable to facilitate and operate the blueprint methodology for the whole County. Concern was raised regarding the suggested closure of these sites. The Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services stated that this was early day with the Waste Strategy & Policy Manager adding that whilst no firm decisions had been made, reassurances were provided that staff requirements would be met.

RESOLVED that the Waste Strategy Update and the progress made during the interim phase of the Waste Strategy January 2023 be noted.

5. BULKY WASTE REVIEW

The Committee received a report on the Bulky Waste Review. The report presented the review scope of the bulky waste service for preliminary consideration and comment. The Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste and Infrastructure Services stated that the aim was to maximise the reuse, repair and recycling potential of bulky waste items, promoting sustainability, reducing the service's carbon footprint and to advance the Council's Circular Economy project 'Eto' and other similar community-based initiatives.

The comments/observations raised were responded to as follows:-

- Reference was made to the bulky waste profile by items and weight table within the report. It was felt that the 69% of estimated weight was mainly attributed to cheaper furniture not being as well-made as the high end furniture causing a higher disposal rate. It was commented that more investment should be made to encourage and advise the public on how they could maintain and look after their furniture, which in turn would last longer avoiding the high rate of bulky waste.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability in recognising the challenges acknowledged that there was a lot more that could be achieved.

- It was commented that large empty spaces such as Debenhams in Carmarthen, could be utilised as a repair centre and that the online Repair Directory could be enhanced to provide more information to the public on what items can be repaired where.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 5.1 The Bulky Waste Review be received;**
- 5.2 Officers note the Committee's observations on the potential options for the future Bulky Waste Collections Service during this early engagement stage.**

6. DRAFT STRATEGY FOR GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT FOR POLLINATORS

The Committee received a report which appended a draft strategy for grassland management for pollinators on the Carmarthenshire County Council estate for 2023. In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability highlighted that this Council had set out its ambition as part of the Cabinet Vision Statement to increase the biodiversity of all Council owned land, and recognise the strong interrelationship between climate change, the loss of biodiversity and human wellbeing.

It was reported that it was a good opportunity to share the draft strategy with the Committee during the early stages of its development.

Committee Members were informed that the draft strategy considered amenity grasslands, land within schools, regeneration portfolio and housing portfolio it did not however include hedges and verges or farmland.

The comments/observations raised were responded to as follows:-

- A number of comments were raised in recognising the decline in the species and it was applauded the strategy included an increase in wildflowers which in turn would make a difference in increasing bees, butterflies and other species.
- It was reported that there were sections of grass containing poppies which were cut down during a scheduled grass cut. When challenged the operator stated that this was being cut as a scheduled instruction. The Cabinet Member stated that this was an area for continuous improvement. The Head of Place and Sustainability explained that historically amenity grass was cut for aesthetic reasons, however changes were being made in consideration of the timing of the cuts to provide flowers the benefits of time to encourage seed, fauna to regenerate and the soil and nature to thrive. Through leadership and direction now is a good opportunity to change for the future. The Grounds and Cleansing Manager emphasised that that this was not the directive that was being given at this time and that a concerted effort to train staff and raise awareness would be made.
- Credit was given to all who has been involved in developing the Strategy.
- In response to a query regarding working with schools Eco-Committees, the Biodiversity Officer stated that the department often works with schools both on an individual basis, when they contact the department for advice and also with the Schools Action Group. It was reported that often, it is the pupils at the schools that are pushing for more work to be done in such areas. In addition, Town and Community Councils have done a significant amount work following successful applications of grant funding.
- The Biodiversity Officer reported that the Council had invested in a new cut and collect equipment to work towards implementing the strategy.

- The Head of Place and Sustainability highlighted that the important aspect was the collaborative work and explained the first phase of the strategy was the evidence gathering, policy setting that over the Autumn period the impact, cost and area assessments would be completed. A robust targeted engagement approach with the communities would also be a priority.
- It was asked, if there was a plan or scope to include sports clubs and other areas not just ccc owned or managed land? The Biodiversity Officer reported that the intention of the strategy is that it could be adopted by Town and Community Councils as well as Public Service Board partners. In respect of Sports clubs and associations, it was reported that the department had successfully worked with one sports association to date and that further work with sports clubs across the County was welcomed.
- In response to a query regarding Himalayan Balsam, the Biodiversity officer explained that it was listed the same as Japanese Knotweed – an invasive, non-native species and whilst it does have benefits for pollinators when in flower, it was currently one of the most rigorous spreading invasive species. Therefore, it is encouraged to pull the species up before it develops the flower to avoid the seed spread which could be deemed as an illegal action by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Draft Strategy for Grassland Management for Pollinators be received.

7. REFERRAL FROM COMMUNITY, HOMES AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - JUNE 2023

The Committee considered a referral from the Community, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee which was resolved at its meeting held on 29th June 2023. The referral requested that the Place, Sustainability and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee look at the broader issue of energy efficiency and the generation of energy in relation to the historic housing stock of the County.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability explained that the referral related to a review of conservation areas under the planning policy remit. Within the context of the planning policy, the Community, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee also discussed the important issue of energy efficiency measures as they related to listed buildings across Carmarthenshire.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

7.1 The Referral from Community, Homes and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – June 2023 be accepted;

7.2 A report providing data and information on the energy efficiency and the generation of energy in relation to the historic housing stock of the County be added to the Committee Forward Work Plan.

8. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the 23rd November, 2023.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the list of forthcoming items for the Committee meeting to be held on the 23rd November 2023 be agreed.

9. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 21ST JULY 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 21st July, 2023 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE