

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **22nd September 2021**

Report Subject: **Progress update on Decarbonisation Plan**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor David Davies, Deputy Leader /
Executive Member Regeneration and Economic
Development**

Report Submitted by: **Michelle Morris, Managing Director**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
26.08.21	26.08.21	07.09.21			15.09.21	22.09.21		Decarb Programme Board 8 Sept

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline progress made since the adoption of the Council's Decarbonisation Plan and the declaration of a Climate Emergency on 24 September 2020.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The [Decarbonisation Plan](#) set out how we would deliver our commitment to the ambition of the Welsh Public Sector to achieve net Zero by 2030. It outlined how we could reduce our organisational emissions across nine transitions, see Appendices A and B.
- 2.2 Since the plan was adopted a Decarbonisation Board (the Board hereafter) has been established chaired by the Managing Director consisting of a range of experienced officers from across the Council, for Terms of Reference, see Appendix C.
- 2.3 The Board agreed to carry out readiness assessments for each of the nine transitions to understand what was already being done, and to identify the key actions we need to take to progress. This process is being based on good practice from the Place-based Climate Action Network (PCAN) at Leeds University. The transition areas are:
- Transport Direct
 - Transport Commissioned
 - Sequestration
 - Procurement Goods
 - Procurement Services
 - Procurement Works
 - Electricity
 - Heat
 - Waste

2.4 Making Good Progress

The Board agreed that the first readiness assessment to be examined would be 'Transport Direct' making up 8% of our gross carbon emissions. Key stakeholders from a range of service areas were involved in the process held in May and June 2021 via online workshops, bringing valuable knowledge on progress and insight on how challenges can be overcome. It is of note that staff energy and engagement in giving time to the readiness assessment was high. The initial approach has provided a very good start and something that can be used to build on developing and shaping the process using feedback and learning as we move forward.

2.5 The products from these workshops have been carefully considered by the Board and CLT in July 2021 with a number of high level actions agreed. These are outlined below with organisational leads identified:

2.5.1 Fleet

- Develop a fleet plan and resource its implementation by building costs into Corporate Medium Term Financial Plan. **(Lead: Community Services)**
- Develop and resource a low carbon depot. **(Lead: Community Services)**
- Ensure procurement arrangements are in place to support the plan. This needs to recognise the inter-dependant work on the new depot and collaborative opportunities at a regional and national level. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**
- Replace small fleet ULEV in phased way in line with available space, grid capacity and infrastructure. **(Lead: Community Services)**

2.5.2 Travel

- Embed the new operating model and assess its impact in terms of decarbonisation. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**
- Consider how to further reduce commute / travel impact in wider areas of the business e.g. Schools and Social Services. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**
- Investigate and identify staff demand to travel more actively and consider business case to meet this demand e.g. showers at main sites, secure shower facilities, safe storage and e-charging for cycles. **(Lead: Community Services – Active Travel)**
- Develop a plan for non-depot charging infrastructure for fleet and personal ULEV vehicles at key staff sites in the new operating model. **(Lead: Regeneration and Development)**
- Explore how staff can be encouraged to switch to ULEV. **(Lead: Commercial Services)**

The paper informing CLT decision making is attached at Appendix D.

2.6 In terms of next steps, further readiness assessments on the remaining transitions will follow. Work is already underway during August 2021 in undertaking assessments on transitions related to buildings: Electricity, Heating and Procurement (Works). These collectively make up 22% of our gross carbon emissions. Once again engagement and energy levels from the staff involved has been high with a real commitment to share their knowledge

and insight in informing corporate decision making. It is equally important to note however, that challenges are being identified and in terms of expectations the staff involved in identifying these rightly expect their observations to be given carefully consideration.

2.7 It is anticipated that all of the transitions will have been subject to a readiness assessment with high level actions identified for each during this financial year 21/22. Progress on agreed actions will be monitored via the Council's existing business planning process on an ongoing basis with updates provided by the identified leads on a quarterly basis.

2.8 **Welsh Government Net Zero Reporting Guidance**

In May 2021 the Welsh Government produced its guidance on its expectation in terms of content and reporting requirements for Net Zero Reporting for Local Authorities in Wales.

2.9 The Council is well placed to respond to this requirement and has been proactive in using the best advice and guidance available to develop accurate calculations of its carbon footprints for 2018/19 and 2019/20 which were instrumental in shaping an evidence based approach to our [Decarbonisation Plan](#). Furthermore, Officers representing the Council have provided insight into the calculations at a number of regional events during 2019 and 2020 having been identified as good practice by peer organisations such as Natural Resources Wales.

2.10 As a consequence of this, the Council is in a strong position to be able to respond to the Welsh Government reporting expectation. The Board in the July meeting agreed to set up a sub group of relevant officers to ensure work is undertaken to consider the minor recalculations required for our 2019/20 carbon footprint in-line with the guidance (now confirmed as the "base line" year), and to make arrangements for calculation for our 20/21 carbon footprint (and subsequent years which will follow).

2.11 The deadline set for this work (19/20 and 20/21) is 31 October 2021. On completion we will then need to calculate our 21/22 footprint by the end of June 2022 (and for every subsequent year). This updated position will be reported to Scrutiny Committee.

2.12 **National Policy Context**

The Council through its representation on the WLGA Decarbonisation Strategy Panel is kept up to date on emerging policy frameworks from Welsh Government. These include a number of proposed Local Government decarbonisation commitments which will form the Local Government contribution to the Public Sector Chapter of the Welsh Governments second delivery plan Net Zero Wales (NZW) 2021-2025 which is due to be published in October 2021. It is of note the proposed actions are being developed from the Decarbonisation Strategy Panel deep dives. It is worthy to note that insight gleaned from these deep dives has also being built into the readiness assessments being considered by the Board and CLT, which should place us in a stronger position by ensuring we are focussing our efforts on those things that will accelerate decarbonisation.

- 2.13 Members will be aware that the UK is hosting the 26th Climate Change Conference in Glasgow from 31 October 2021. COP 26, short for Conference of Parties, has published a number of goals for this summit and these and other information on what is planned can be found on its website: www.ukcop26.org
- 2.14 **Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly**
The Blaenau Gwent Climate Change Citizens Assembly was the very first of its kind in Wales. In March 2021, it brought together residents from the Blaenau Gwent area to consider the question: *'What should we do in Blaenau Gwent to tackle the climate crisis in a way that is fair and improves living standards for everyone?'*
- 2.15 44 participants from the area attended the Assembly meeting for a total of 23 hours to hear evidence from over 20 different experts, discuss the issues, and produce recommendations for what local public service organisations, communities and individuals could do to address the climate crisis and improve lives for people in Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.17 Following deliberation, the assembly members made a number of recommendations which are provided at Appendix E
- 2.18 An "all members" briefing session on the Climate Assembly was held earlier this year and a commitment was given to publish a Council Response to the findings and this work is underway and will be reported to Scrutiny Committee in due course.
- 2.19 The Council is also taking a lead role in developing the response provided to the Climate Assembly on behalf of the Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board and this work is also underway and will be completed this Autumn.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 This report will be considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 15th September 2021, and any feedback will be presented verbally to the Executive Committee.
- 3.2 Option One
That the Committee considers and accepts the progress made as presented.
- Option Two
That the Committee considers the progress made and provides specific comments.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 Welsh Government published a delivery plan 'Prosperity for All: A Low Carbon Wales' that calls for public sector leadership, including the ambition for the Welsh public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030. In September 2020, Council has approved an evidence based Decarbonisation Plan for the organisation.
- 4.2 The Decarbonisation Plan is an important element of the Council providing public leadership on climate change. The long-term implications of climate

change mean that is also central to the PSB's responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In particular, that in accordance with the Sustainable Development Principle.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

At this moment in time the Council has taken a business as usual approach to resourcing the Decarbonisation Plan. That said, as each transition is progressed and high level action agreed, costs will be identified to make this work happen and will, moving forward, form separate reports from business leads for consideration of any investment required. It is anticipated that investment decisions will need to be taken by the Council, Welsh Government and wider partners to enable local action.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Having declared a climate emergency, reputational damage is a risk if we do not respond to the challenges facing us as we implement our agreed Decarbonisation Plan. The systematic way in which we are approaching the transition work should enable us to arrive at well informed proposals on the actions we need to take to move towards Net Zero. These actions will though need to be fully integrated into our business planning processes and closely monitored to ensure progress is maintained.

5.3 ***Legal***

The legislative context around climate change is evolving with both UK and Welsh Government announcing new, more ambitious emissions reductions targets.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The full human resources implications in implementing the plan are not yet fully known. These will become clearer as leads take forward actions that emerge from the readiness assessments. These might include the need for officers with specialist skills and knowledge to deliver key elements. It is also highly likely that staff engagement will be a key enabler in what is really a programme of transformational change.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

See supporting appendices:

Appendix A: All Transitions Infographic from Decarbonisation Plan

Appendix B: BGCBC Carbon Footprint by Transition Breakdown

Appendix C Decarbonisation Board Terms of Reference

Appendix D: Transport Direct Summary Paper and Data Appendices

Appendix E: Climate Assembly Report

<https://cynnalcyrmru.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Blaenau-Gwent-Climate-Assembly-Report-ENG.pdf>

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The Decarbonisation Plan helps to reduce the risks from climate change to service delivery, as well as identifying opportunities to develop a more resilient council for the public.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The development of the readiness assessments has at its core the involvement of key stakeholders from the relevant service areas. The Blaenau Gwent Climate Assembly built on our existing public engagement with environmental issues, including recycling, nature areas and eco councils in schools.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Decarbonisation Plan and the readiness assessment approach fully recognises the long term nature of some of the high level actions that will emerge from this process.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Addressing increasing revenue costs from rising energy prices and a reliance on fossil fuels. It is important that decarbonisation and whole life cycle costs (both financial and carbon) are considered in all capital spending decisions, so that the Council is not locked into new carbon intensive infrastructure with high long-term running costs.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working.***

We are working with partners on climate change in Blaenau Gwent through the PSB Climate Mitigation Steering Group and Well-being Plan and at the regional level through Climate Ready Gwent. Work on regional projects is already underway, where public bodies in Gwent face similar challenges and can pool resources, such as EV charging and Fleet Review. Procurement is a major element of our carbon impact and many of our suppliers also supply other local public sector organisations, so collaboration will be key to engaging them with cutting their carbon emissions.

More immediately we are currently working with Aneurin Leisure Trust to identify those emissions we will need to include within carbon footprint in line with recent Welsh Government Guidance.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Integration remains a key element of the Decarbonisation Plan and our plans in tracking agreed actions through service area business plans demonstrates this.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The Decarbonisation Plan is central to the Council's contribution to the Welsh Government ambition of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

Not required as this is a progress report and does not relate to strategic decisions.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

An EQIA was carried out for the Decarbonisation Plan and separate EQIA's will be carried out for major decarbonisation actions by relevant business leads as part of usual reporting arrangements.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

7.1 The Board will oversee progress against the transitions, and reporting accordingly through the Managing Director to CLT.

Key actions agreed by the Board will be built into the service area business plans. This will ensure Decarbonisation actions are integrated into the Council usual performance management arrangements. This has already been carried out for Transport Direct action noted above.

Furthermore, progress updates will be made through the forward work programmes of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Executive Committees.

The Council will report appropriately to Welsh Government in-line with their Net Zero Reporting arrangements.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

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