

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Energy Sub-Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

13 May 2024

Chairperson: **Councillor P.Miller**

Councillors: A.Owen, A.Lewis, J.Hurley, J.Harvey and R.Sinnett

National Park Representatives: S.Alderman and L.Bickerton

Officers In Attendance: K.Jones, S.Brennan, K.Tillman, G.Bacon, A.Moss, R.Moxey, K.Davies, S.Aldred-Jones, G.Jones, D.West, B.Suddell and C.Plowman

External Advisors: V.Camp and E.Barlow

1. **Chairs Announcements**

The Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interests**

The following declaration of interest was received:

Liz Bickerton

General declaration - As she is a freelance consultant, who undertakes a number of evaluations for third sector organisations, some involving energy efficiency. Energy efficiency is one of the priorities of the Energy Sub Committee

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024, were approved as an accurate record.

4. **Costed De-carbonisation Delivery Plans and the Funding Challenge for Net Zero 2030**

Members were provided with information on the current position regarding costed decarbonisation delivery plans for Net Zero, and the wider funding challenges associated with this.

The circulated report informed the Committee of the approach taken by Swansea Council, following direction from the Welsh Audit Office (WAO), in order to meet Welsh Governments Net Zero ambition. It was noted that Councils needed to fully cost their action plans and ensure that they were aligned with Medium-Term Financial Plans.

Officers from Swansea Council explained that they developed a high-level costed delivery plan, which was a way of monetising what the ask was going to look like. A discussion took place regarding the findings of that piece of work, which included buildings and energy, street lighting, fleet and grey fleet. It was explained that this process provided an indication of how much money would be needed to take this work forward; this was noted to be a high cost for Local Authorities.

It was expressed that Local Authorities were committed to taking this work forward in order to achieve Net Zero, however there would need to be some changes from a Welsh Government level, in order to assist them in doing so.

Officers from Carmarthenshire Council provided their experiences and confirmed that they had adopted a similar approach and had similar figures to Swansea Council.

It was stated that it would be beneficial if there was a consistent approach throughout Wales in regard to this work stream, which would allow all Local Authorities to come up with a consistent methodology. This statement was supported by Members, who expressed that the biggest benefit of doing this was around the commonalities where Councils could co-procure, as well as the ability to find priorities as a Region. It was added that it would be even more beneficial if this was carried out on a National basis.

External advisors, from Welsh Government Energy Service, highlighted that there was a climate strategy panel task and finish group set up with a focus on procurement; particularly looking at the ways in which the Energy Service could support Local Authorities going forward.

Reference was made to offsetting, and the fact that even though Councils purchase 100% renewable energy, this wasn't counted in terms of offsetting. Members expressed their frustration with this and felt that it was a missed opportunity.

Following on from the above, it was noted that Welsh Governments view was that offsetting should be the last resort, and that the focus should be on all reasonable efforts to reduce emissions. The Committee was informed that there was a team within the Welsh Government Energy Service, who were working hard on determining what offsetting might look like. In addition, there was work being undertaken to identify how the guidance could be updated; with a focus on renewables and purchasing.

Officers from Neath Port Talbot Council and Pembrokeshire Council also provided an overview of the work they were progressing. Representatives from Neath Port Talbot confirmed that in January 2024, they commissioned the Carbon Trust to assist in formulating a Net Zero costed plan; they were expecting this to be concluded by October or November 2024. Representatives from Pembrokeshire Council noted that they had taken a different approach to the other three Local Authorities and were progressing on a case-by-case basis in order to try and keep it cost neutral.

Members were provided with the perspective of Brecon Beacons National Park and the areas they were looking to address going forward. These were noted to be procurement and waste, as these were the areas in which they had the largest remaining footprint.

A discussion took place in regard to the short-term actions, including the asks of Welsh Government and the associated barriers; and what tangible steps the Energy Sub Committee can take to support the effort.

One of the barriers highlighted from Officers was the process of obtaining grant funding; in particular the timings associated with getting the schemes ready for submission and the timings in which Local Authorities must spend the grant. It was noted that if the

process was to stay the same, Councils would need more resource to be able to do this better.

It was explained that there was a piece of work that Officers were undertaking, in conjunction with the Welsh Government Energy Service, in terms of consolidating and advancing the asks from Welsh Government. It was added that a workshop would be arranged to discuss this in more detail; the outcomes of the workshop will be provided in a future meeting of the Energy Sub Committee.

The Committee were provided with a brief overview of the Net Zero Scenario Planner that was under development by the Welsh Government Energy Service. It was explained that this tool would gather data from each of the 22 Local Authorities across Wales, principally around building energy usage, street lighting and fleet. It was stated that the information will be mapped up to the year 2030, with the purpose of applying change in emissions factors from turning on certain interventions, so that Councils can identify what happens to their emissions if they implement the measures. Members were informed that for fleet and street lighting, this would be a move to electric vehicles and a switch to LED lighting; and for buildings there were a few options that essentially build from a decarbonisation only option, to add in energy efficiency measures and renewables to make this more affordable.

In terms of timelines associated with the planner, it was noted that the data request had been submitted and would be re-received by the end of June 2024. It was added that Officers would spend the summer of 2024 building the models, before running training events in September/October of 2024 to demonstrate to Local Authorities how to use the tool; following this, a summary report will be sent to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) of the overall findings, and then it would be over to each Local Authority to test the tool and run scenarios.

Following on from the overview, a discussion took place in regard to the use of a single framework for 22 Local Authorities, all with different positions; and how ever-changing technologies will also impact the use of the tool. It was acknowledged that there were going to be limitations to the tool, and the Energy Service were going to have to make some assumptions to enable to model to work at this scale; there wasn't sufficient resource to be able to produce a custom model for each Local Authority. External advisors stated that they had

customised it to try and make it as relevant as possible; however, there will be differences for each Local Authority.

Members were provided with assurances that the Energy Service would be able to assist Local Authorities with their detailed and technical feasibility review; this would feed into the scenario planner.

It was expressed that the Committee would benefit from understanding what the procurement plan for fleet would look like, and if there was visibility across the Region.

Following the discussion, the report was noted.

5. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items received.

CHAIRPERSON

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