

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Communities Scrutiny Committee
MEETING DATE	23 Sept 2021
TITLE	Climate Change
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CABINET MEMBER	Cllr. Dyfrig Siencyn, Leader
PURPOSE	An update on what the Council is currently doing to meet the challenges of climate change and other steps that are practical for the Council to act on in future.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 We are all aware that climate change has far-reaching effects on the environment around us.
- 1.2 The Council announced a climate emergency at their meeting on 7th March 2019, committing to taking decisive action to reduce our contribution to those issues that cause climate change and protect our communities from its impacts.
- 1.3 In a report to Council in December 2019, Members recently announced that Cabinet had established a taskforce to consider what further needs to be done to achieve that and that the intention was to establish the Council's Climate Change Action Plan before the end of the 19/20 financial year.

2. UPDATE

- 2.1 Unfortunately, the Covid-19 emergency interrupted the ongoing work to produce a Climate Change Action Plan. However, it is important to note that the relevant work we do as a council has continued despite the emergency.
- 2.2 As departments re-addressed the work to consider what could be incorporated into any such plan, the need for a co-ordinator for the project was identified and a recommendation was made to ask the Cabinet to approve one off resource to fund a programme manager for a period of 12 months. Cabinet approved this funding at its meeting in January 2021. At the same meeting, it was also decided to establish a Climate Change Board to inform the work.
- 2.3 The Climate Change Programme Manager started in this co-ordinating role in July 2021. Since then, the manager has reconvened the Climate Change Board and begun the work to map all relevant council activities in order to draw together the action plan and identify any gaps needing to be addressed.
- 2.4 A draft plan is intended to be in place in the coming months, and it's intended to form the basis of a members' workshop which will then lead to the adoption of a future Action Plan.
- 2.5 It should be noted that the current intention is to produce an Action Plan for Gwynedd Council. This means that the scheme will address the council's impacts on climate change as an organisation, as well as any direct and statutory duties we have.
- 2.6 It is emphasised that the delay in bringing the action plan together does not mean that our work as a council to meet the challenges of climate change has been delayed. The council has been carrying out its work as normal, and here are some examples of that work:

- Looking at how we further reduce the council's carbon emissions including working on a new Carbon Management Plan for our buildings, working on a new Fleet Strategy (and seeing a large percentage of the Council's fleet transferring to using green fuel) and completing the project to change street lamps to LED.
- Developing the waste and recycling field further so that what is sent for treatment can be reduced, with an emphasis on the circular economy, opportunities to increase recycling on streets and increasing participation in the food collection service – all with the aim of becoming a waste-free county by 2050.
- Looking at opportunities to reuse road materials when repairing our roads to reduce the amount of new material purchased and how much is sent to landfill for disposal.
- Reducing and adapting our grass-cutting practices in some areas to promote growth and biodiversity. We are also looking at ways to reduce our use of chemical herbicides where possible.
- Responding to inland flooding incidents by acting as the Lead Local Flood Authority. The information from flooding incidents in housing (in conjunction with information gathered from relevant partners such as Natural Resources Wales) is used to establish an understanding of the areas at risk and we have been moving towards a more catchment-related model of dealing with flooding to ensure that dealing with the problem in one place does not create negative repercussions further down the catchment.
- Responding to coastal flooding incidents and working together regionally to implement the Shoreline Management Plan. This work includes working with and supporting communities where necessary. We are also currently working on a Local Flood Strategy.
- Implementing our Biodiversity Duty Plan which requires the council to consider the impact of their decisions on biodiversity. This includes consulting on planning applications.
- Contributing to the Gwynedd Nature Partnership work to develop the Gwynedd Nature Recovery Plan and community projects that improve the environment and biodiversity locally.
- Working on an Ash Dieback strategy to consider the effect of the disease on our habitats and our environment and to consider ways of keeping the carbon stored in the trees.
- Working across departments in order to consider how nature can be used to support the work in other fields such as flooding or waste.

3. OTHER STEPS THAT ARE PRACTICAL FOR THE COUNCIL TO LOOK AT IN FUTURE

- 3.1 As part of drawing up the Action Plan, we will look at how we could further reduce carbon emissions - considering the target set by Welsh Government for the public sector to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.2 The Biodiversity Duty Scheme is a statutory requirement of the Council and needs to be given greater priority as it is key to the climate change response. We will look at how we can improve on how the council fulfils its biodiversity duty and any further steps we as a council can take to increase the positive influence we have on the county's biodiversity.
- 3.3 In addition, we will incorporate the Local Flood Strategy which will be prepared by the YGC Department and consider how best to communicate and engage with our communities as part of that work.

- 3.4 We will also incorporate the Fleet Strategy, the new Waste Strategy and consider what further action we can propose to promote the circular economy and reusing.
- 3.5 Following the implementation of a plan for the council itself, it will be appropriate for us to look at how we can reduce the effects of Gwynedd as a county on the environment and climate change by considering how we can educate, support and influence our communities to play a role in this vital task.
- 3.6 Whilst the content of the above report gives an indication of the type of areas we would be looking at, it is not possible to say with certainty what changes the council will implement at this stage. There is still a lot of work to be done to understand where we could have the greatest impact and therefore where to prioritise our investment. However, we can of course update the committee as the work develops.