

Public Awareness of Recycling in Public Bins – Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

(arising from consideration of the Torbay Council Climate Change Action Plan)

Report to Cabinet on 15 April 2025

Background

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Board met on 12 February 2025 to consider the submitted report which set out the draft Torbay Council Climate Change Action Plan. The Cabinet Member for Place Development and Economic Growth, Councillor Chris Lewis, the Divisional Director of Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency, David Edmondson, the Principal Climate Emergency Officer, Jaqui Warren and the Climate Strategy and Project Officer, Alex Carter attended the meeting and responded to questions.
2. Members asked questions in relation to what happened if the Council did not secure the funding to decarbonise Sherwell Valley Primary School; what was the running costs of the heat pumps at Torre Abbey and Torbay Leisure Centre compared to other sources (a written response would be provided); over 2,000 trees had been planted, how many more trees were planned to be planted (a written response would be provided including costs); how was the Council engaging with the public on carbon reduction; how could the Council help businesses to provide biodegradable waste such as cardboard cups and cutlery and ensure that there were suitable bins for recycling; how was carbon neutral work being linked in with the refresh of the Torbay Local Plan to ensure that they complement each other; how embedded were the Council's procurement processes to challenge suppliers to provide evidence to reduce their carbon emissions; there was a trial for dual bins in Upton Park for rubbish and recycling but there was an issue with the recycling being contaminated so all the waste was going for disposal, what action had SWISCo taken around education to ensure the bins were used correctly (a response was not provided at the meeting and therefore the Board made a recommendation to the Cabinet regarding education to encourage people to dispose of their waste correctly); why was the flood tool developed by Exeter University not being promoted and used (a written response would be provided); and why was there no mention of the two solar farms in the Action Plan.
3. In response to questions, Members were advised that it was likely that the Council would secure the funding for the decarbonisation of Sherwell Valley Primary School, but that if this was not achieved a robust business case would need to be

developed and submitted to the Capital and Growth Board as there were no other suitable grants available. It was noted that the Climate Team had been very successful in securing grants and bringing in new money to support climate change.

4. Members discussed the Miyawaki forests which involved high density planting the size of tennis courts and their benefits. The Council was working with SWISCo to identify suitable sites for these forests in Torbay.
5. Members were informed that the Climate Change Partnership, led by the community, was taking the lead on wider public and business engagement in respect of climate change and carbon reduction, through the Greener Way for the Bay Strategy, which had also been signed off by the Place Leadership Board on behalf of key statutory partners. Torbay Communities was working through the Imagine This Group who work with young people and subject to funding would be looking at the natural environment and engaging with their families, which could then be rolled out to other areas.
6. Members acknowledged that the Torbay Council Climate Change Action Plan set out the actions that Torbay Council would be taking forward, for example, introducing food waste caddies across all Council buildings.
7. The Climate Team was working closely with the Local Plan Team to ensure that the policies aligned with one another. There was potential if agreement cannot be reached on the numbers of housing that Supplementary Planning documents could be created around affordable housing and climate change.
8. In response to questions around procurement, Members were informed that information was included within the current procurement templates around environmental policy, but the questions depended on the level of contract being procured. The Action Plan included more work around collecting actual data on carbon footprints etc. and working with key contractors to embed the process. Work was being undertaken with the Procurement Team to ensure that carbon emissions were being captured by contractors so that the Council understands them up front and what they were doing to tackle emissions. The Team was also working with the Council's Regeneration Partners.
9. The two solar farms were referenced in the Greener Way for the Bay document, which was leading and delivering a lot of actions with partners and the community. It was felt that duplication between the two Plans should be avoided.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The Board reflected and debated the information provided to them, both verbal and written and formed the following recommendation to the Cabinet. On being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried unanimously.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 That the Cabinet be recommended to request SWISCo to raise awareness of recycling in public bins, to reduce the risk of contamination of the recycled waste and enable it to be processed effectively.

Background Papers

