

Partnership Council for Wales – 7 July 2025

10.30 - 12.05

Hybrid meeting

Teams

&

(Amroth 2, Welsh Government Office, Cathays Park)

Chair's opening remarks

Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

1. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government (the Cabinet Secretary) welcomed members to the meeting and noted apologies.
2. Before addressing the main agenda items, the Cabinet Secretary referred to the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement at the WLGA Conference on 19 June, highlighting it as a significant milestone in the relationship between the Welsh Government and local government in Wales.
3. The Cabinet Secretary also acknowledged the recent anniversary of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and highlighted that today (Monday 7 July) the Welsh Government was publishing its response to the Phase two recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. Also today, the Building Safety (Wales) Bill was being laid before the Senedd. The Bill aims to improve building safety in Wales, through the introduction of a new building safety regime covering the occupation and ongoing management of multi-occupied residential buildings.

Agenda item 1: Local Government supporting the Foundational Economy

Led by Nick Sullivan, Foundational Economy Division, Welsh Government

4. The Cabinet Secretary introduced Nick Sullivan, from the Foundational Economy and Industrial Transformation Division of the Welsh Government, to lead the first agenda item on the importance of the foundational economy and the Welsh Government's efforts to support it.
5. Nick highlighted the importance of the foundational economy, including essential sectors like food, housing, and care, and the Welsh Government's commitment to nurturing this economy through job creation, fair work, and resilient local supply chains.
6. Nick confirmed the Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee had published a report in April with ten recommendations, including on policy definition, stakeholder engagement, inclusive procurement, and local recruitment, highlighting successful local recruitment initiatives like Hywel Dda's "grow your own" approach in nursing and the apprenticeship program by Swansea Bay University Health Board.

7. The following key points from members were raised:
 - The successful recruitment of professional apprentices in planning within Monmouthshire.
 - Powys's "grow our own" social workers initiative was discussed and the need for equalisation of pay and conditions across sectors to avoid competition.
 - It was proposed that greater emphasis be placed on the green economy, with reference to regional initiatives funded by the Community Lottery Fund aimed at supporting young people into green employment.
 - A call was made for stronger collaboration among public sector employers, with the Cardiff Commitment highlighted as a model for creating opportunities for young people.
 - It was noted that achieving a balance between localised, bottom-up approaches and the need for scale in procurement remains a challenge, particularly when it comes to measuring the impact of foundational economy efforts.
 - The importance of embedding the funding code of practice for the third sector was emphasised, alongside recognition of the sector's ability to deliver innovative solutions to foundational economy challenges.
 - While collaborative procurement was welcomed, concerns were raised about the added complexity it introduces, which may inadvertently disadvantage smaller businesses.
 - The discussion also underlined the value of fair work and sectoral agreements, with reference made to ongoing efforts by the Social Partnership Council to simplify and improve procurement frameworks.

[Agenda item 2: Climate Change](#)

Climate change: mitigation, resilience and leadership – progress and future pathways

Led by Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs

8. For the first part of this agenda item, the Cabinet Secretary invited the Deputy First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs (the Deputy First Minister), Huw Irranca-Davies MS, to lead a discussion focused on climate change mitigation, resilience, and leadership.
9. The Deputy First Minister emphasised the urgency of addressing climate change, highlighting the increasing frequency of extreme weather events and the need for a collective response. He thanked local authorities for their efforts and stressed the need for bolder actions and further collaboration. Examples of local initiatives, such as heat pumps and solar panels in schools, were discussed.
10. The Deputy First Minister highlighted the following key points in relation to current achievements and challenges:
 - **Carbon Budgets:** Wales exceeded its first carbon budget target and is on track to meet the second. However, meeting the third carbon budget by 2030 will be challenging and requires renewed efforts from all sectors.

- **The Climate Adaptation Strategy for Wales published in October 2024:** Outlined actions and plans for building resilience and reducing the impact of climate change.
- **Investment in Resilience:** Examples include the Prestatyn Coastal Risk Management Scheme, which received significant funding and will protect thousands of properties from flooding.
- The need to **rethink the narrative around climate change to emphasise the invest-to-save benefits and the immediate positive impacts** on jobs and local economies.

11. The Deputy First Minister also referred to the following areas:

- **Assessing Risks:** Local authorities and public services should assess climate risks and integrate climate change considerations into all planning and operations.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging with communities to understand their needs and build shared solutions is crucial.
- **Welsh Government Support:** The Welsh Government Energy Service is available to support organisations in securing funding for decarbonisation projects.

12. The following key points from members were raised:

- The social and employment benefits of flood defence projects were noted, with an emphasis on ensuring long-term legacy and skills development.
- It was suggested that climate initiatives be framed as “invest to save” to help address public concerns about funding being diverted from core services.
- Concerns were raised about the effects of large-scale energy projects on local communities, highlighting the need for improved planning to secure local benefits.
- The challenges of decarbonising older buildings were discussed, alongside the significant investment required to address them.
- The role of trade unions in advancing green jobs was underlined, with a proposal for greater involvement in task and finish groups.
- The Deputy First Minister acknowledged the need for better communication and narrative around climate initiatives, emphasising the immediate and long-term benefits. He welcomed further collaboration with trade unions and local authorities to address challenges and seize opportunities.

Action Item: Suggestion to invite the UK Climate Change Committee to the next meeting for insights on pathways to 2050 and future carbon budgets.

Due to the above item overrunning, the Climate Strategy Panel update was postponed. Agenda item 3 was initiated before re-visiting the below item at the end of the meeting.

Local Government Climate Strategy Panel update

Led by WLGA & Cllr John Spanswick, Bridgend County Borough Council Leader

13. The Cabinet Secretary introduced the regular update on the work of the Local Government Climate Strategy Panel and the WLGA Climate Support Programme as the second part of this item.
14. Cllr John Spanswick, in his capacity as spokesperson for the Local Government Climate Strategy Panel (the Panel), spoke about the progress and activities of the Panel, emphasising the importance of collaboration and shared learning among local authorities:
 - **Procurement:** Guidance on carbon reduction plans is being finalised, with a focus on reducing the carbon footprint through procurement practices.
 - **Transport:** Addressing issues related to the transition of council fleets to electric vehicles, with good practice being shared among councils.
 - **Buildings:** Every council has been provided with a scenario planner to assess the costs and carbon savings from decarbonising their estates.
 - **Land Use:** Training has been provided to councils on using tools to assess the carbon implications of changes in land use.
 - **Financial Grants:** The WLGA support program is offering small-scale financial grants to councils, with details issued recently.
15. A draft paper on adaptation and resilience was being prepared for the WLGA Executive Board meeting in July.
16. Turning to future priorities, Cllr John Spanswick emphasised a set of proposed commitments designed to enhance collaboration and resilience:
 - **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Emphasising the importance of collaboration across councils and with local stakeholders.
 - **Service Resilience:** Identifying and addressing service-level risks to ensure resilience under various climate scenarios.
 - **Community Resilience:** Developing community resilience plans in partnership with local stakeholders, including the voluntary sector.
 - **Leadership:** The need for climate adaptation training for elected members and senior managers.
17. In relation to community resilience, Cllr Spanswick referred to an incident in Bridgend where a community was cut off from power for four days, highlighting the need for better coordination and sharing of information about vulnerable people among local authorities, health boards, and electricity providers.
18. It was confirmed the adaptation strategy would be reviewed and adopted by the WLGA Executive Board later in July, with further updates to follow.

[Agenda item 3: Tackling poverty and inequality – our shared commitment to Streamlining Welsh Benefits and ArWAP](#)

Led by Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

19. The Cabinet Secretary invited Jane Hutt MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd, and Chief Whip (CSSJTCW) to lead the agenda item and provide an update on the progress of the Welsh Benefits Charter and the Phase One route map. This initiative aimed to streamline the process for claiming benefits, such as the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Free School Meals, and the School Essentials Grant, with implementation targeted for April 2026.
20. The CSSJTCW confirmed funding of just under £500,000 had been announced to support local authorities in engaging with the delivery of the Phase One route map.
21. A pilot involving 12 local authorities and the data analytical company Policy in Practice was underway to address data sharing challenges and identify residents missing out on entitlements.
22. The CSSJTCW also highlighted the multiple benefits of streamlining benefits, including improved satisfaction for benefits teams, reduced dependency on other services, and economic boosts. The need to break down data sharing barriers was also emphasised.
23. The CSSJTCW welcomed Professor Emmanuel Ogbonna, Co-chair of the External Accountability Group for the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan to reflect on implementation of the plan in tackling racism and embedding anti-racist practices across public services.
24. Professor Ogbonna highlighted the following key points:
 - The importance of local government in delivering the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and the role of the External Accountability Group in monitoring implementation.
 - Professor Ogbonna stressed the need for leadership in tackling racism and the importance of understanding the extent of racism within organisations. He encouraged leaders to review employment data and address disparities.
 - Whilst discussing the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the focus was on tackling systemic barriers and inequalities in public services and ensuring consistent anti-racist practices.
25. The following key points from members were raised:
 - The issue of progression for ethnic minority employees within organisations.
 - The suggestion of incorporating anti-racism objectives into managers' key performance indicators. Support was offered from the External Accountability Group for organisations looking to change their culture.

26. The CSSJTCW thanked the Partnership Council members for their engagement and emphasised the collective responsibility in delivering the outcomes of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. The CSSJTCW concluded by highlighting the importance of focusing on community cohesion and learning together.

Concluding remarks

Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

27. The Cabinet Secretary asked if there was any other business. As no additional matters were brought up, the Cabinet Secretary expressed gratitude to the members for their attendance and contributions.

28. It was noted that the date for the autumn meeting was to be confirmed, with the hope it would be the first in-person meeting since COVID. The Cabinet Secretary stated she would welcome views from members on whether they would wish to meet in person and, if so, for suggestions of venues. This will be followed up by the secretariat.