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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** WEDNESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2018, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

11 **Correspondence Following Committee Meeting** (Pages 3 - 12)

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My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

Date: 13 December 2018

Councillor Russell Goodway,  
Cabinet Member Investment & Development,  
Cardiff Council,  
County Hall,  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



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Dear Councillor Goodway,

### **Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 12 December 2018**

On behalf of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, please pass our sincere thanks to the Head of Property, Helen Thomas and Principal Surveyor, Eirian Jones, for attending Committee to facilitate pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet proposals to acquire a long leasehold on the Biffa Waste Recycling Centre, Bessemer Close, Cardiff, and dispose of a long leasehold on 3-4 Wharton Street, Cardiff. Following discussion at the Way Forward Members asked that I pass on the following comments and concerns to inform the Cabinets consideration of this matter later today.

The Committee understands why the directorate considers the purchase of a long leasehold on the Biffa Waste Recycling Centre, Bessemer Close, to be prudent and in line with the Council's five year Investment Estate Strategy 2016-21. There was discussion about the decision made in 1990 which has led to the Council having to spend £1.25m purchasing property which it imprudently let for 125 years at a peppercorn rent, also losing large sums of rental income since that decision was made.

In respect of 3-4 Wharton Street, we note that this asset currently generates an income into the Council's Investment Estate, the longevity of which is not secure and, together with the maintenance responsibility, the asset does not fit the criteria of the Investment Estate Strategy. We also note the officer view that there is currently some volatility in the retail property market. However, Members had some concerns about the disposal of the long leasehold given that 3-4 Wharton Street is a building with three current tenancies. We would not wish the Council to find itself in a similar

situation in respect of Wharton Street that it finds itself in with the Bessemer Close site.

The Committee found it useful and informative to consider these two proposals but was concerned at the 'last minute' opportunity which led to a rushed and unsatisfactory scrutiny. Members agreed that going forward the Committee's remit will focus on the performance of the Investment Estate Board, and its achievements in line with the Investment Estate Strategy, rather than on specific property transactions.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to the officers who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee. I look forward to taking up the offer of future scrutiny of the performance of the Investment Estate Board.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Walker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Walker".

**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER**

**CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee.  
Neil Hanratty, Director Economic Development.  
Helen Thomas, Strategic Estates Manager.  
Eirian Jones, Principal Surveyor.  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager.  
Clair James, PA to Director of Economic Development.



Date: 17 December 2018

Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance,  
Cardiff Council,  
County Hall,  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Chris,

### **Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 12 December 2018**

A sincere thank you for attending the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee in December to consider progress in addressing the Budget Reduction Requirement for 2019/20 and the budget consultation Changes for Cardiff. Following the scrutiny, Members agreed that I pass on the following observations captured during the Way Forward for your consideration.

#### **Oversight of budget planning**

The Committee notes that until the Final Settlement is confirmed there are some uncertainties that Cabinet will need to debate further to ensure the budget gap is closed.

We note that should the settlement be greater than forecast then the option of retaining a Financial Resilience Mechanism within the Council's budget will be reviewed. We take on board that some notable uncertainties exist around proposals for funding, such as Teachers pension, and that proposed Council Tax increases have not yet been agreed, and could exceed last year's levels with Welsh Government clearance. We note also that final proposals will include the Section 151 officer's advice to Cabinet and take into consideration the longer term budget prospects for 2020/21.

Members were interested to hear that the proposed directorate savings totalling £19,377m this year, at the highest point had been £42.3m in previous years. We

note that proposed new grants from Welsh Government are understood to relate to additional activities.

## **Budget Consultation 2019/20**

The Committee is of the opinion that the budget consultation this year is not straightforward to complete. Specific observations were:

- Some questions exploring issues, such as *foster care* and *funding for city events*, require the respondent to make a judgement without providing the figures that would enable an informed judgement.
- There is considerable information contained in the survey, and the questions are peppered throughout. Members suggest that if the questions were concentrated in a removable section, then the remaining information could be retained as a useful resource for future reference.
- We consider that some of the questions are leading.
- Members consider some of the language used in the survey, such as referring to foster caring as a career, could be improved upon.
- Importantly, Members have concerns about an apparent lack of pre-launch testing. We consider that this survey could have been improved had it been tested with Councillors, minority groups, and particularly with the Youth Council.
- We acknowledge that timescales are short between the announcement of the Local Government Settlement in October and publication of the survey in November, however we believe scrutiny of the draft survey would benefit all and urge you to factor engagement with scrutiny into your planning timelines for the 2020/21 budget consultation.

The Committee wishes to endorse the importance of focus group work to inform the survey, and particularly your targeted community work with ethnically diverse minority groups, using sensitive and appropriate facilitators.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, please pass my sincere thanks to all who attended PRAP Scrutiny Committee for consideration of the ongoing challenges of the Budget Strategy for 2019/20. Our oversight of progress in budget planning does

not require a response, however I look forward to a response to our suggestions for improvement in respect of future budget consultation exercises.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER**  
**CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources  
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance  
Gareth Newell, Policy, Partnerships and Citizen Focus Manager  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager  
Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Officer.

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Date: 19 December 2018

Councillor Chris Weaver,  
Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance,  
Cardiff Council,  
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Dear Councillor Weaver,

### **Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 12 December 2018**

As Chair of the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee, thank you for attending Committee to update Members on the Cabinet response to the recommendations of our inquiry into Customer Leadership in the Council. Members were delighted to welcome the new Head of Customer Services, Rachel Bishop, together with Isabelle Bignall in her capacity as Chief Digital Officer with the corporate remit for customer standards. Please pass on our appreciation for their clear presentation of progress. We offer the following comments and observations for your consideration as you progress the Customer Leadership agenda.

#### **Project management**

The Committee was pleased to hear that responding to its inquiry has taken the form of a project, with clear milestones and responsibilities set out for each of the seven recommendations. We note you have already made progress in sharing the expertise of contributors to the inquiry, Admiral and British Gas. We offer our congratulations at the positive way you have embraced the work of the task and finish group.

#### **Motivating staff**

Members welcomed clarification that the new strategic suite of customer focussed documents will be the starting point for a customer roadshow, with which you aspire to motivate the workforce. We commend your intention to launch the Customer Charter at the commencement of the 2019/20 personal review cycle. We consider it important to ensure that staff across the range of service areas are behaving in a customer friendly manner, and agree that delivering the launch to teams 'in person' will make all the difference.

### **Customer focussed training**

A key recommendation of our inquiry was the importance of ensuring each member of staff understands who their internal or external customers are, and re-enforcing such understanding through the Personal Review conversation. We are therefore pleased to hear that Level 1 customer training will focus on internal customers and relating the Council's values to an employee's internal colleagues and customers. We look forward to monitoring your mission to uncover pockets of excellence in customer leadership across the organisation.

The Committee welcomes the proposal for robust training for all, including mandatory online training, and by working collaboratively with the Cardiff Academy. We endorse a training plan comprised of different level modules. However Members are concerned as to how well resourced the Council is to support customer training for all staff. We wish to stress how important it is to take all staff through training. We will therefore be looking to monitor coverage as we support you in taking this agenda forward in the future.

### **Customer metrics**

We acknowledge the importance of selecting a customer metrics system that can be consistently applied across all Council services, recognising that consistency is important. This will allow the Council to undertake a follow up assessment of how much effort the request for service required, acknowledging that good customer service might be considered to be no interaction with the Council.

### **Professional body membership**

Members take on board your view that in selecting an independent professional body to support the customer journey you must compare offers and identify the right one. We are pleased to hear investigations and comparisons are already underway. Clearly the opportunity for benchmarking our customer performance as members of such a body is valuable, and we look forward to you reporting back to committee on this.

Finally, as Councillors, Members have considerable experience of accessing the Council's frontline services, and we urge you to engage with all Members. We feel

that an opportunity exists to focus on the child as a customer, extending a customer perspective to the child's experience of Council services over time.

Once again, on behalf of the Committee, my sincere thanks for attending the PRAP Scrutiny Committee to deliver the Cabinet's response to the Committee's inquiry. I intend to programme regular updates on how the corporate focus on customer leadership is progressing, and as such look forward to an update of progress early summer 2019.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID WALKER**  
**CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee  
Isabelle Bignall, Chief Digital Officer  
Rachel Bishop, Head of Customer Services  
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager  
Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Officer

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