

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 MAY 2015

Present: County Councillor Mitchell(Chairperson)  
County Councillors Clark, Chris Davis, Lomax, McKerlich, Merry  
and Ralph Cook

### 67 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hyde

### 68 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Part III of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interest in general terms and to complete personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial Members would be asked to leave the meeting and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote.

### 69 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 14 April 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

### 70 : ENVIRONMENT & STRATEGIC PLANNING, HIGHWAYS & TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT DIRECTORATES - PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 - 2014/15

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Bob Derbyshire (Cabinet Member for Environment), Councillor Ramesh Patel (Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability), Tara King (Assistant Director, Environment) and Andrew Gregory (Director of Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transportation).

The purpose of this report was to present the Environment Directorate and Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport Directorate performance reports for Quarter 4 (January to March) of 2014/15 prior to the documents being considered at Cabinet in May 2015.

#### Environment

The Chairperson invited Councillor Derbyshire to make a statement. Councillor Derbyshire informed the Committee that the Quarter 4 performance report shows a month on month improvement despite the severe financial challenges that the local authority faces and will continue to face. In Quarter 1 the Directorate was facing a projected budget deficit of £1.5 million but the budget is now in surplus. Extra steps had to be put in place to reduce the deficit. At the start of this financial year it was judged that last year's cuts were sustainable and so the Directorate can now look for further savings.

The Assistant Director gave a presentation based on performance information from the Environment Directorate, after which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee enquired what the situation was regarding industrial tribunals and was advised that the last one that took place concerned an equalities and process issue in connection with those on the redeployment register and procedures have been changed as a result of it.

A Member reported that he has received a number of complaints from older people about the amount of time it takes to get through to C2C when, for example, they want to complain about litter or fly-tipping. The Committee was advised that the local authority is aiming to reach a situation where those who can make such reports online use that method, although a person-to-person service will continue to be offered for those who can not. The degree of ease or difficulty someone might experience when trying to get through to a customer service advisor at C2C partly depends on the time of day at which they are calling. Getting those who can contact C2C via the internet to do so will reduce the pressure on C2C and enable calls to be taken more quickly. The Committee suggested that a 'mystery shopper' approach could be used to test the C2C service and the Assistant Director agreed to discuss this with Isabelle Bignall (Assistant Director, Communities, Housing & Customer Services).

The Committee asked what proportion of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) that are eligible for licensing under the Additional Licensing Scheme, are up to standard. The Assistant Director advised the Committee that she did not have information to hand and would have to provide it at a later date.

The Committee noted that performance on recycling has improved from 49% in Quarter 2 to over 60% in Quarter 4 and asked how this improvement had been achieved. The Committee was informed that increased post-sort arrangements and a new street sweepings contract had helped increase the recycling rate. For example, street sweepings that had been stockpiled for two years were processed and included in the 2014/15 figures.

Members noted that there had been an improvement in performance on sickness absence rates, and that the rate for Quarter 4 was reported as 15.99 full time equivalent days pro rata across the whole year. The Committee enquired whether this was the result of strategy or of a single issue, such a reduction in staff numbers. The Committee was advised that it is the result of both. The Sickness Absence Policy is being applied to the letter and there have been some dismissals. Sometimes people are genuinely ill and in other cases a pattern of absence can be detected. An analysis has been carried out, using data that goes back a number of years.

A Member commented on her surprise that the report shows that for Quarter 4 the percentage of reported fly-tipping incidents cleared within 5 working days stands at 96.6% as this level of performance does not correlate with her own experience. Officers were asked whether this improvement is the result of a planned approach or of responses to reports of incidents, and were also asked how black bin bags are categorized when collecting this data. The Committee was advised that the improvement is the result of an overall approach which aims to reduce the number of

reports that are received. Also, a backlog has been cleared and this has fed into the performance data for Quarter 4. People can report problems via the Council's website and in future there will be a speedier response. When black bin bags are put out on the wrong collection day this is categorised as waste presentation and not fly-tipping. This used to be categorised as fly-tipping until about two years ago. Such incidents are logged as waste presentation in Flycapture, which is the national fly-tipping database used by local authorities. Previously these would have been logged as fly-tipping events. The Committee requested that Members be provided with the date on which the change in categorisation was made and asked for ward by ward figures on waste presentation.

The Committee questioned why the target in relation to the percentage of food establishments which are broadly compliant with food hygiene standards is set at only 88.2% and suggested it would be better to set the target at 100%, which although more challenging would also be more publicly acceptable. The Committee was advised that in the present financial situation the current targets are challenging. The figure of 88.2% represents what the local authority finds when establishments are inspected for compliance, rather than what the authority is doing to achieve greater compliance by the establishments. Officers accepted that perhaps more explanation of the figure could be given in the performance report.

In an effort to increase performance on recycling the local authority is to replace the large black wheelie bins that are used in the city with smaller bins. The Committee asked whether citizens will be fully informed on what should be put in the smaller bins and what should be recycled. The Committee also enquired whether smaller bins are to be provided to occupants of flats, who currently have large communal refuse bins. The Committee was advised that there will be more education for the public on recycling and that refuse facilities for flats is a matter that will be addressed later in the implementation of the strategy.

#### Transport, Planning & Sustainability

The Assistant Director gave a presentation based on performance information from the Energy & Sustainability Team, after which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

A Member reported to officers that Cymaes Street in Trowbridge is the only street in the area to have been excluded from the Welsh Government (WG) sponsored energy conservation programme that funds provision of external rendering to properties. The reason residents have been given for the exclusion is the size of the area that WG is willing to pay for and is also due to the relative wealth of the residents, based on 2001 census results. The Member asked to be provided with a fuller explanation of the reasons behind the exclusion so that he can pass this on to those residents who have been affected. The Committee also suggested that a wider question would be what the criteria for deciding on eligibility were. The Assistant Director advised the Committee that she would have to check on this and on the rates of return on these schemes.

The Committee asked whether it would be worthwhile for the local authority to invest in the provision of more solar panels for properties. The Committee was advised that borrowing capacity could be a difficulty. There are a lot of projects that are competing for funding.

The Committee asked when householders will get the benefit of the Cyd Cymru scheme which offers consumers a low cost energy tariff. The Committee was advised that consumers would get the benefits of this as soon as they register and switch to the tariff.

The Director gave a presentation based on the Quarter 4 performance information for the Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transportation Directorate, after which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee noted that the Local Development Plan (LDP) has been accepted by inspectors, subject to limited consultation, and asked what are to be the areas for further consultation and what areas of the LDP have not been accepted. The Committee was advised that the local authority has responded to 187 questions that were raised and the inspectors do not want another hearing. The responses to the questions will be incorporated into the LDP. The Director agreed to provide the Committee with the questions and the responses that were given.

The Committee asked when the planning application for the bus interchange will be submitted and was advised that this take place in September/October 2015.

The Committee asked about the progress that has been made on the Letting Boards controls project. The Committee was advised that there is to be a moratorium between September and November and this will be a good time to implement new powers. The local authority is currently looking at the complex enforcement procedure. All lettings boards are to come down between September and November and all that go up after that will have to be compliant. There are to be no free-standing boards.

The Committee noted that the key performance indicator data shows that the Directorate has not met its targets for decisions on household planning applications to be determined within 8 weeks, with Quarter 4 performance at 63.20% against a target of 80% for 2014/15. The Committee asked officers if they could explain this. The Committee was advised that performance dropped after Quarter 1. The Directorate has been through a major restructure and there has been a significant increase in city development. Consideration is being given to putting extra resources into the team. The Committee asked for the current local average for agreement of planning applications and officers agreed to provide the Committee with this information.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Members and officers for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Members highlighting the issues raised during the Way Forward discussion.

71 : GREENER GRANGETOWN - FINAL CONSULTATION PHASE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Ramesh Patel (Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability), Tara King (Assistant Director, Environment), Ian Titherington (Lead Officer – Drainage), Michelle Russ (Rainscape Regulation - Dwr

Cymru Welsh Water) and Martyn Evans (Strategy Advisor - Natural Resources Wales).

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with the opportunity to be a part of the final phase of the Greener Grangetown consultation exercise, allowing consideration of proposed street designs and delivery timelines.

Ian Titherington gave a presentation, after which the Chairperson invited questions from the Committee.

The Committee pointed out that contractors' vehicles can cause parking problems for residents and asked how many contractors are likely to be involved in the scheme. The Committee was advised that this has been a major concern and that ensuring that adequate parking is available for local residents is an important consideration.

The Committee asked whether there is any way that the local authority can force developers to create in streets front spaces that are not just hard spaces that collect rainwater and whether residents can be prevented from concreting over the green spaces, such as front lawns, that they have. The Committee was advised that under WG legislation any resident that now wants to pave over the green space in front of their house has to have planning permission. Also, pressure is being put on developers to include in areas of new development more green spaces in front of properties

The Committee asked how much money will be saved by not having to pump surface water eight miles to the waste water treatment plant. The Committee was advised that the initiative is not so much about how much money will be saved as about avoiding having to use other resources, such as electricity, to pump the water. The construction costs will be about £2.2 million and a before and after study will be carried out. Flow monitoring systems will gauge changes in the amount of water that is being pumped. There will also be community benefits. Welsh Water bears the cost of pumping the water and has carried out a cost/benefit analysis. There will be savings on storm pumps and real benefits in terms of removing the water, making areas less susceptible to the effects of flooding that may occur due to climate change. The Welsh Water officer agreed that the results of the cost/benefit analysis could be shared with the Committee

The Committee asked for examples of how community ownership of the new green spaces will be facilitated. The Committee was advised the spaces will be adopted by the Council. There will be community and street champions and the local authority will be responsive to the community and to requests for changes. It will be a partnership and will tie in to anti-litter campaigns. Community ownership may be easier in streets where there are established, long-term communities rather than in streets that have a more transient populations. The needs of the population in the area have been taken very seriously in this project. Things have been looked at on a street-by-street basis. It is hoped that as the appearance of the area changes local residents will be encouraged to take ownership of the spaces. The scheme will encourage people to take pride in their community.

A Member for Grangetown commented that the Turner's Mansion site in Grangetown could perhaps be used as a parking site for contractors' vehicles. Contractors

sometimes park their vehicles in parking bays reserved for disabled people and residents and this should be discouraged.

The Committee asked whether rainwater that gathers at the rear of properties will continue to go into the drains for pumping to the water treatment plant and was advised that this will be the case as about 30% of rainwater will still be needed to go into the sewers for cleansing purposes.

The Chairperson thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for attending the meeting, for their presentation and for answering questions from Members.

AGREED: That the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee writes to the Cabinet Member highlighting the issues raised during the Way Forward discussion.

## 72 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

This report was presented by Richard Bowen, Principal Scrutiny Support Officer.

The Cardiff Council Constitution requires all Scrutiny Committees to 'report annually to the Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate'.

The Committee was briefed on the report and invited to comment on the draft annual report and the following comments were made:

- Councillor Cook was concerned that his photograph appears in the report, giving the impression that he was a Member of the Committee during the period covered by the annual report, which he was not. Councillor Cook does not agree with the stray horse policy that the report indicates is supported by the Committee and is concerned about the proposal that grazing land is provided on license to gypsies and travellers. The Chairperson suggested that to address Councillor Cook's concerns a further paragraph could be included to cover that issue and point out that Councillor Cook was not a Member of the Committee during the time covered by the report.
- Councillor Cook was concerned that the situation is still not such that members of the public can ask questions at meetings of the Committee and was advised that Members would have the opportunity to raise this at the Scrutiny Improvement Project workshop on 18 June.

AGREED: That the draft annual report be noted.

## 73 : CORRESPONDENCE UPDATE - INFORMATION REPORT

This report was presented by Richard Bowen, Principal Scrutiny Support Officer.

Following most Committee meetings, the Chairperson writes a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member or officer, summing up the Committee's comments and recommendations regarding the issues considered during that meeting. This report provided a record of those letters and any other correspondence received since the previous Committee meeting.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

74 : WAY FORWARD

During the Way Forward discussion it was agreed that the Chairperson would, on behalf of the Committee, send to the Cabinet Members a letter thanking them for their attendance and that of their officers and drawing together the issues that had been raised during meeting.

75 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 9 June 2015 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 1, County Hall.

The meeting terminated at 7.50 pm

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Chairperson