

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2016

Present: County Councillor Mitchell(Chairperson)
County Councillors Aubrey, Clark, Chris Davis and Hill-John

24 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor White.

25 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

26 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2016 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

COUNCILLOR CHRIS LOMAX

At the commencement of the meeting the Chairperson made a brief statement regarding Councillor Chris Lomax, who had recently passed away. Councillor Mitchell stated that Councillor Lomax was a gentleman, who's contribution to the Environmental Scrutiny Committee was valued. The Committee would like to send their condolences to Councillor Lomax's family. Councillor Patel said that Councillor Lomax was passionate about the Environmental Scrutiny Committee and he would be sadly missed by all.

27 : PAVEMENT AND FOOTWAY MAINTENANCE IN CARDIFF

The Committee received a report providing an opportunity to scrutinise the way in which pavement and footway maintenance is managed in Cardiff.

Members were advised that the Highways Asset in Cardiff was valued at £2.4 billion and is comprised of carriageways, footways, drainage, street furniture, street lighting and other structures. Pavements and footpaths (footways) cover a combined distance of 1,600 km across Cardiff and have a combined replacement cost of £193 million.

The Council is currently developing a Highways Asset Investment Strategy, a draft of which was considered by the Environmental Scrutiny Committee on 17 May 2016. Section 5 of the Strategy is entitled 'Footway Capital Investment Strategy'. This section addresses the current state of pavements and provides an overview of the footway asset; a summary of the asset condition; details of current asset investment; and a detailed breakdown of the four capital investment options being modelled in the strategy.

The document demonstrates that over time the footways asset will deteriorate based on current funding levels. Additional funding will be required in the longer term to

improve the condition and reduce deterioration; improve safety by reducing reactive repairs; reduce third party claims; and improve customer satisfaction.

The Footway Capital Investment Strategy addresses the condition of the footway by considering the results of the footway network survey undertaken in 2013, by categorising the various footway construction types and assessing the condition of each type. Each type is further categorised into five footway classes. Further details of the construction types and condition categorisation were set out in the report.

A further driver for asset management planning and a long term strategic approach in the requirement of CIPFA to include accounting information on the valuation of the highway network infrastructure assets in the Council's Statement of Accounts. Members were asked to note that the changes to the accounting approach to highway infrastructure assets were considered by the Audit Committee on 22 March 2016. Feedback from the Audit Committee highlighted the importance of ensure processes are in place and resources allocated to achieve the Asset Management aims.

Members were advised that a number of authorities have increased highway capital investment to achieve near steady state funding. The County Surveyors Society has produced advanced tools which accurately predict future funding requirements. These tools were used to produce the funding predictions contained with the report.

Historically, the approach to funding highway maintenance has resulted in fluctuating budgets. This prevents the development of a long-term investment strategy which creates results in highways assets being managed separately thus limiting efficiency opportunities; an inability to set long-term targets and define acceptable backlogs; levels of service delivery vary over the short-terms; and limits the opportunity to adopt a long-term strategy approach creating the situation where the maintenance backlog continually increases. The report provided further information demonstrating the direct correlation between the level of funding and the conditions of the highways asset. Any investment less than a 'steady state' approach would result in deterioration of the condition of the asset and result an increased maintenance backlog.

Members were advised that the recharge for public liability claims for 2014/15 was £2.1 million. In year recharging are not indicative of the claims received but they reflect the 'top-up' required to the Council's insurance provision. Managed declined (equivalent to current funding levels) will generally result in more third party claims being received by the Council and any defence against such claims would be adversely effected. There could also be an increase in insurance premiums as the Council's insurers could see the reduction in the condition of the highway assets as a greater insurance risk.

The report summarised the benefits to taking a long-term approach to highway maintenance funding and an analysis of the options being considered.

The Committee received a presentation from Gary Brown, Operational Manager, Assets, Engineering and Operations and Andrew Greener, Team Leader, Assets. Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raised questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked for clarification on the criteria/weighting used to prioritise maintenance works. Officers stated that annual assessments of the conditions of footways are carried out. A list of works is produced and this is circulated to all Members. The list is 'live' and priorities can change. The annual inspection is used to gain understanding and prioritise works. More detailed surveys are conducted to prioritise further. The Cabinet Member asked Members to note that performance indicators for carriageway performance were improving. In 2011/12 a total of 9.12% of carriageways were in a poor condition. In 2015/16 a total of 5.2% of carriageways were in a poor condition.
- The Committee was advised that the investment strategy aims to prevent potholes developing through maintenance of the footway. If maintenance is not carried out then the conditions of the footway deteriorates and the cost of reinstatement increases dramatically.
- Members suggested that in the long-term the preferred surface for footways should be tarmac as this surface was able to withstand pavement parking. Members asked how many paving slabs were replaced each year as a result of pavement parking. The Cabinet Member advised that if illegal parking was taking place on pavements then the authority would prosecute. The Cabinet Member supported the view that tarmac should replace paving stones in areas where pavement parking was causing damage to the footway.
- The Committee asked for further details of how damage to the footway caused by the lifting of tree roots is managed. Officers advised that they work with colleagues in the Parks Department to identify problem sites. Trees are removed and the footways are repaired. A Member stated that trees within his ward were identified as causing damage to the footway 4 years ago and were yet to be rectified. The Cabinet Member stated that there were many trees on the list of works. However, with the limited resources available, the most dangerous trees were prioritised. Officers stated that the Parks Department take the lead in terms of identifying which trees should take priority.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes on the Committee's behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.

28 : RECYCLING AND WASTE RESTRICTING PROGRAMME - ONE YEAR UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing Members with an update on the Recycling and Waste Restriction Programme which was introduced in the Summer of 2015. The introduction of Phase 1 of the programme aimed to provide an additional 5,000 tonnes of recycling and £622,000 of budget savings. The main drivers for achieving this were a move towards a smaller capacity wheeled bin, or the equivalent volume of bespoke bags; an expansion of number of properties using wheeled bins to better contain waste; and to further control the issuing of green bags and food liners to reduce wastage and to only provide these to Cardiff residents to use the recycling.

Councillor Bob Derbyshire, Cabinet Member for Environment, was invited to make a brief statement. Councillor Derbyshire stated that, although there was some resistance to the proposals set out in Phase 1 of the programme, this was the way

most local authorities were moving. Since the changes were introduced Cardiff has achieved its recycling targets and therefore the changes were justifiable.

Members were advised that since the publication of the 2011 Waste Strategy the need for reducing residual waste has been highlighted. Analysis of residual waste had illustrated that a high proportion of recycling and food waste remain in the waste stream. If Cardiff was to achieve the Welsh Government's 58% recycling target for 2015/16 there would need to be a change in citizens' habits towards waste minimisation and recycling. To achieve this a city-wide waste restriction programme was required.

The Welsh Government's preferred collection blueprint was the introduction of a 140 litre bin as best practice. Welsh Government anticipate that as recycling targets increase more authorities would move towards smaller wheeled bins or reducing the frequency of collections. Research and public consultation suggested that the preferred methods of restricting in Cardiff was a move towards a smaller bin.

The main areas for change under Phase 1 of the programme were highlighted in the report. Officers considered that, as with any change to service provision, a period of disruption was to be expected. It was anticipated that any disruption as a result of the changes would be resolved within 3 months. Additional resources were provided to support residents during the transition to the new arrangements.

In terms of stakeholder engagement, Members were advised that in parallel with the 2015/16 budget consultation, a separate consultation took place regarding recycling and waste services. The consultation included key stakeholders, such as community groups, waste personnel, Councillors, contractors and a random postal survey of 3000 residents. The consultation received 1443 responses and these indicated that residents supported the need to recycle and reduce impact on the environment through waste minimisation and recycling. The headline results of the consultation exercise were set out in the report.

Phase 1 of the programme was allocated revenue funding of £500,000 and capital funding of £2.4 million for the provision of new bins. The procurement exercise managed to deliver bins at a cost of £1.3 million – a saving of £1.1 million less than budgeted for. It was estimated that the proposals would also achieve a £622,000 saving in 2015/16 and an additional £318,000 over the life of the MTFP.

Members were asked to note that since Phase 1 of the programme was introduced the Council's recycling performance has increased from 53.38% in 2014/15 to 58.18% in 2015/16.

The Committee received a presentation providing an update on the changes to the Recycling and Waste Programme from Tara King, Assistant Director - Commercial and Collaboration and Jane Cherrington, Waste Strategy Operational Manager, Commercial and Collaborative Services.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Officers stated that initial 'teething issues' were resolved by engaging with ward Members, operatives and residents.
- Members asked how the replacement bins were being tracked. Members were advised that crews were encouraged to track where bins are located and to return them to their owners when necessary.
- The Committee asked officers to explain what arrangements were in place for HMOs. Officers stated that HMOs are asked to provide sufficient bin storage capacity, in line with planning guidance. The Waste Strategy Team and a Flats Officer are looking at providing bespoke solutions at HMOs.
- A Member noted that the recycling performance has increased from approximately 53% to approximately 58%. However, bottom ash from the energy from waste facility accounted for 7%. Officers indicated that the recycling target was calculated from waste collected from a number of waste streams. The 58% figure was calculated using a number of variables which can change annually. Kerbside collection, for example, had increased from 53% to 60%. Other types of collection were not performing as well. Members were advised that the Welsh Government recycling target would not have been achieved without the introduction of the waste restriction programme.
- The Cabinet Member stated that most commercial waste was not recyclable. However, commercial waste did bring in additional income. The total tonnage collected and recycled at the kerbside has increased and the authority has avoided potentially £1.4 million in fines.
- Officers offered to provide the Committee with a profile of the sources of recycling collected in terms of tonnages and percentages.
- Officers confirmed that 78,000 were collected and returned to the manufacturers to be recycled into new bins.
- Responding to a question from a Member of the Committee, Officers advised that the new frontage scheme is using additional enforcement measures to encourage homeowners to remove refuse from frontages at properties. Homeowners are afforded an opportunity to pay for frontages to be cleared by Waste Collection Service personnel. If they refuse, then enforcement action is taken. Members were advised that Cardiff University is funding the provision of two additional Enforcement Officers.
- A Member remarked that during a recent visit to a HWRC in Bridgend service users were provided with a visual reminder of what the recycling targets were and what was currently being achieved at the facility. Officers advised that there were looking to provide similar information to service users at Cardiff's HWRCs.
- Members asked whether seeking to increase income from commercial waste collections would impact upon the recycling targets. Officers confirmed that the Welsh Government's Environment Bill will be placing more responsibility on businesses in terms of waste presentation and recycling their waste. The authority will be in a stronger position.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes on the Committee’s behalf to the Cabinet Member to convey their comments and observations.

29 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESTORE OUR RIVERS TASK AND FINISH EXERCISE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chairperson asked the Committee to note the progress being made on the Restore Our Rivers task and finish exercise.

30 : CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee received copies of correspondence sent and received in relation to matters previously scrutinised by this Committee.

AGREED – That the correspondence report and attached documentation be noted.

31 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on 1 November 2016.

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Chairperson

The meeting terminated at 8.00 pm

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