

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2018

Present: County Councillor Patel(Chairperson)
County Councillors Philippa Hill-John, Owen Jones, Lancaster,
Lay, Mackie, Owen and Wood

27 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Wong.

28 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

29 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2017 were approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of the following paragraph at the beginning of minute number 25: Environmental Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme Review:

“At this point in the meeting the Chairperson requested that webcast be paused. It was proposed that the webcast should not continue. The proposal was voted on and the Committee agreed that the webcast should not continue. Councillor Hill-John raised concerns that the webcast was stopped prior the Committee giving its approval. Councillor Hill-John requested that her dissent be recorded in the minutes.”

30 : CABINET RESPONSE TO MANAGING SECTION 106 FUNDING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into the Managing of Section 106 Funding for the Development of Community Projects. The Committee established a Task and Finish Group to undertake the inquiry. The report of the Task and Finish Group was presented to the Cabinet on 21 September 2017. The Cabinet’s response to the report was agreed by Cabinet on 16 November 2017. The Committee received a report setting out in detail the Cabinet’s response to each of the Task and Finish Inquiry recommendation.

Members were advised that the Inquiry made a single process recommendation that required a response and the recommendation was accepted by the Cabinet. The recommendation was based on the following elements:

- The creation of a project list
- An identified project point of entry for new ideas
- A project validation and assessment process

- Project decision making (approval and rejection)
- A project list to act as a storage point forward based projects
- Specified geography for each project list
- An access point for complementary services
- Supporting resources

Full details of the Cabinet's response were set out in Appendix 2 to the report. Members were advised that officers have started to address Task and Finish Enquiry recommendations. A report will be submitted to Cabinet in the near future setting out a new process for managing Section 106 for community projects. Subject to Cabinet approval, the new process will be introduced in 2018/19.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport; Councillor Keith Jones, Chair of the Planning Committee; Andrew Gregory, Director and Michael Barrett, Planning Officer, to the meeting. The officers were invited to give a brief presentation on the authority's Section 106 obligations and proposals for managing community projects.

The Chairperson opened the debate on this item. Members were asked to comment, seek clarification or comment on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Committee supported the proposals for management of Section 106 funding and the creation of ward-based lists of prioritised community projects. Members considered that the proposed process was an improvement on the present position, where officers proceed with community projects and ward members are not consulted. The Director stated that an additional benefit of the new system would be that in future the authority would be in a stronger position in terms of its negotiations with developers.
- Members asked whether less high-profile projects would be given lower priority. Officers stated that there are different types of Section 106 funding and their allocation is subject to legal agreement. Community open space projects will proceed following consultation with local members and discussions will take place. The proposed process aims to bring consistency to this approach across the city by establishing an organised set of lists, that will run in parallel with the new Neighbourhood Improvement lists. Section 106 funding would feed into those projects. Officers were seeking to gain an understanding of local ward members priorities.
- Members questioned what authority would determine and make the final decision on which projects to proceed. The Director stated that ultimately the decision would be a Member decision, but it was anticipated that decisions would be reached by mutual consent, following discussions that accommodate different points of view. The Cabinet Member accepted that it would be useful to get some clarity on this particular point and he welcomed the views of the Committee.

- Members asked the officers to clarify where developers' views would be considered and what recourse would local ward Members have if the schemes on their local list did not accord with their own priorities. The Director stated that, although each scheme would be different, each list would contain a list of common priorities from within the ward, and this would provide a starting point. The Chairperson felt that it was important to emphasise that each list was not a 'wish list' of possible schemes; each list was made up from schemes considered to be planning gain and officers were able to provide advice on this important point. The Chairperson reiterated that training for Members was essential.
- Members noted that in inner city wards, where more development is taking place, there would be more Section 106 funding available. Members questioned how long each list would be therefore. Officers considered that the length of each list would depend upon the feedback received from local ward members. It was accepted that in some wards, where more development is taking place, it was likely that priorities would be delivered more quickly.
- The Committee asked how Section 106 scheme would be monitored, particularly in respect of deadlines for schemes that are time limited. Members asked how much Section 106 funding has been lost due to expiry in recent years. The Director stated that an officer was now in post who would be responsible for co-ordinating Section 106. The Director was unaware of the amount of Section 106 funding lost, but it was not a significant amount. The Director gave an undertaking to provide Committee with this information.
- A Member asked how each local list would be managed and whether the list would be dynamic in terms of adding projects, or removing projects that would not be considered to be viable; and also whether local members would be consulted on proposed alternative schemes. The officers stated that there would be regular contact with local members and items would only be added/removed subject to those discussions.
- A Member asked whether consideration has been given to digitalisation and adopting a business style approach to the utilisation of Section 106 funds, such as zero based accounting. Members were advised that Section 106 funding is being tracked and officers were not aware of any monies being returned to developers. Officers were looking to simplify processes wherever possible.
- The Committee requested that all Members receive 6 monthly updates regarding Section 106 funding in their wards.
- The Cabinet Member sought Members willing to volunteer to test that list system prior to their roll out Council-wide.

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

31 : CITY OPERATIONS DIGITALISATION PROJECTS

The Committee received a report providing Members with an opportunity to review the digitalisation projects currently being developed and delivered for services within the City Operations Directorate.

The Committee was advised that at the meeting held on 7 October 2017 Members considered that it would be worthwhile scrutinising how services are being improved through the use of modern technologies. The Council is in the process of defining a digitalisation agenda to help modernise and shape a wide range of Council services. The intention to take this path is clearly set out in the new Cardiff Capital Ambition, in the section titled 'Digital First' which sets out the background, context and future direction for digitalisation in the Council. The report explained that technology is transforming local public services and that increasingly, local authorities are seeking to automate processes, shift customer transactions and services to online channels of communication and to migrate Council systems onto cloud-based solutions.

Digital technologies have successfully delivered efficiencies. For example, through the implementation of mobile working and scheduling, agile working and process redesign, front-line staff in housing maintenance and social care are able to spend more time with service users, with savings released in office accommodation. It is proposed that the Council pursue a comprehensive programme of digital transformation and that, whenever possible, digital needs to be the default means of accessing Council services. A concerted move will be made towards e-payments across the full range of services, balanced by continued commitment to engaging with citizens that do not have access to digital technology.

Members were advised that a focus will be placed on streamlining and automating business processes. Across a number of councils, steps are being taken to push boundaries through the automation of business processes, yet in Cardiff few services have achieved digitalisation. The proposed changes will be supported by a single data platform for all services. This will enable the Council to bring together previously unconnected data sets and to analyse them, to better understand the nature of current demand on services and to predict where demand will occur in the future.

It is proposed that the post of Chief Digital Officer will provide a vital role in ensuring that this programme of change is coordinated and delivered across Council services. As an immediate preparatory step, it is proposed that a review of ICT services, including hardware, software and resources, be undertaken.

The report provided Members of the Committee an overview of the digitalisation projects undertaken, planned or in progress in the City Operations Service area. The report also indicated that the 2018/19 budget saving consultation proposes that £1,206 million savings is allocated against the 'Business Processes including Digitalisation' category, which is described as *'Council Wide Efficiencies – In line with the Council's digital strategy, this saving will be achieved through delivering business efficiencies through third party spend, charging processes, technology and other staff resources. This will put the use of digital forms of communication and service delivery at the heart of how the Council operates and interacts with the people it serves'*.

The Chairperson invited Andrew Gregory and Matt Wakelam to deliver a brief presentation on City Operations Digitalisation Projects. The Chairperson invited Members of the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Committee noted that £1.206 million savings has been allocated to 'Business Processes including Digitalisation' in the budget proposals consultation. Members asked whether officers have discussed the proposals and how they would be delivered. Officers stated that the figures relate to Council-wide corporate savings. Discussions were still ongoing on the precise nature of these savings.
- Members asked whether new technologies would lead to a more proactive approach and link to complaints. Members had experience of having made repeated requests for service at the same locations. Officers advised that it will be possible to interrogate data and identify trends. The new technology will enable 'heat maps' to be used to identify problems in particular locations or associated with particular assets.
- Members asked to what scale or proportion were paper-based systems still being used. Officers stated that the use of paper-based systems varied across the service area. It was estimated that there was a 40/60 digital/paper split and that digital is not currently being used to its maximum potential but the service area is moving in the right direction.
- Members welcomed improvements such as contactless payment parking meters, which had not only increased revenue, but were also better for members of the public. It was considered that the benefits of digitalisation policy would not be seen for some time but the authority must invest time and effort in these changes.
- Members questioned whether new systems would be updated annually in order to stay at the forefront of technological advancements. Officers stated that as new versions of hardware and software are rolled out technology continues to move forward. It was anticipated that updates will be budgeted for and included on the forward programme.
- The Committee was advised that, in general terms, the service area was looking to introduce systems that will allow officers to 'free up' time. This will enable them to apply their expertise and will prevent them being drawn any further into administrative tasks, as is currently the position.
- Responding to a point from a Member of the Committee, Officers confirmed that the authority employs the use of a number of different parking meter systems across the city. Some meters still have paper notices displayed and other struggle with Welsh Language Standards requirements. A series of programmes are in place to renew these assets.
- A Member advised that officers had recently visited his ward to discuss persistent fly-tipping problems. The Member stated that litter collecting teams attend the ward, as do waste collection teams. However, incidences of fly-tipping continue to go unreported.
- Members discussed whether it would be possible to develop an 'app' which would allow bus service users to track the next available bus on route, similar to the 'app' provided by Deliveroo, which enables users to identify in real-time the location of their take-away delivery. Members were advised that Traveline Cymru

proves real-time information on bus journeys. The Cabinet Member considered that there was potential for the development of an app and suggested that a conversation could be held with the winning bidder for the Capital Region Metro.

- Officers were asked to provide details of how the £212,000 savings referenced as 'CONSULT 1' in the 28/19 budget consultation would be realised. Officers stated that it was difficult to see where those savings would be made at present but there was potential to move staff and increase efficiencies and productivity. For example, in the current financial year there have been efficiency savings in the street lighting team. Monthly budget monitoring is undertaken with the finance team. Members raised concerns that the £212,000 were not identifiable should the savings not be achieved. Officers agreed and considered that resources would be managed internally. The officers felt that it was important for Members to recognise that some savings would be achieved and other will not be achieved. The Committee considered that savings proposals should be as clear as possible. The Director stated that, as the service area moves towards digitalisation, the figure represented an estimation of the benefits to be realised and it was broadly aligned to the projects set out previously. Members questioned whether it was wise to estimate a figure before the new Chief Digital Officer was in post. The Cabinet Member accepted this point.

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

32 : IMPROVING CARDIFF'S AIR QUALITY - TASK & FINISH EXERCISE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided a verbal update on the progress of the Task and Finish Inquiry report on Improving Cardiff's Air Quality. A summary note of the terms of reference, key findings and draft recommendations was circulated.

RESOLVED – That the progress update be noted.

33 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented that Committee's Work Programme for 2017/18. Members were asked to consider and agree future items for the Work Programme.

The Committee took the view that a Task and Finish Inquiry into litter would be supported, as litter affects all residents and there would be a great deal of public interest in the subject. A Task and Finish Inquiry would offer an opportunity to look at service improvements and good practice.

Members considered that any inquiry should address litter issues in its broadest sense to also include linkages with fly-tipping, leaf fall and problems associated with waste collection, etc.

Members were also requested to provide expressions of interest if they wish to participate in the Task and Finish Inquiry.

It was agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Office would circulate a copy of the previous Task and Finish report entitled 'Litter in Cardiff' which was published in January 2013. This would provide some context around what might be scrutinised and act as a prompt for Members to suggest potential areas for inclusion in the new terms of reference for the litter and fly-tipping Task and Finish exercise.

34 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to take place on 14 February 2018.

The meeting terminated at 7.45 pm

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg