

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 APRIL 2023

Present: Councillor Owen Jones(Chairperson)  
Councillors Derbyshire, Gibson, Green, Lancaster, Lloyd Jones,  
Proctor and Wood

### 77 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Parry and Shifa Shazad

### 78 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Owen Jones declared a personal interest in Item 4 and Item 5 on the agenda as a Board Director of Cardiff Bus.

### 79 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 February and 16 March 2023 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

### 80 : CASTLE STREET - CITY CENTRE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee received a report providing Members with an opportunity to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of a report due to be considered by the Cabinet on 27 April 2023 regarding the implementation of air quality and traffic management proposals in Castle Street.

Members were advised that the Cabinet report sets out two options. Multi-modal traffic simulation software was used to assess the local impact of either option, providing detailed visualisation and statistical data, in addition to an updated Air Quality assessment.

In 2018, the Welsh Government issued a legal Direction requiring the Council to comply with the EU limit value for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) found in air. The two options considered are:

- Option 1 'All Traffic':

This scheme is the previously approved design included in the Council's Clean Air Plan. The scheme allows general traffic to access the area under reduced capacity, whilst also providing segregated cycling facilities, bus priority and public realm improvements. The design for this option is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

- Option 2

'Bus Gate': A variation on Option 1 where general traffic is restricted from using the street as a through-route. The scheme provides a segregated cycle lane, bus and taxi access through bus gating, and improved public realm via an extension to the

pavement on the south side. The design for this option is included in Appendix 3 of this report.

Both options achieve air quality compliance in Castle Street. However, Option 2 would result in a net gain of NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the wider network.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member for Transport and Strategic Planning, Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment, Claire Moggridge, Head of Transport and Gethin Shields, Transport Programme Manager to the meeting. Following a statement from the Cabinet Member the officers were invited to deliver a presentation on the proposals.

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

- Members asked what permanent changes would be implemented in Castle Street to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists, in particular in relation to segregated cycle lanes. Officers confirmed that the temporary barriers currently in place on cycle lanes would be removed and replaced with curbed segregation as part of the permanent scheme. The scheme would also incorporate safe spaces for pedestrians and segregated bus stops that will improve safety for bus users getting on and off buses. A taxi rank/loading bay will also be provided at the southern end of the scheme near Duke Street.
- Officers were asked to provide additional detail in relation to the City Centre parking zones aspirations. The Head of Transport advised that a proportion of traffic in an around the city centre will navigate the area looking for free on-street car parking. Part of the considerations for the Castle Street scheme is the impact on the wider area. Each of the parking zones identified will have different criteria and will aim to remove traffic movements by commuters looking for parking spaces in residential areas.
- Officers confirmed that the original scheme proposed to infill the underpass on the junction of North Road and Boulevard de Nantes. That proposal will not be taken forward as part of the Castle Street scheme due to cost but if may considered in the future.
- Responding to a question from the Committee, the Cabinet Member stated that the decision in relation to the proposed scheme would improve air quality and would be evidence based. The Head of Transport stated that modelling showed closing Castle Street at this time would have a negative impact on the immediate residential areas and affect bus journey times. However, moving forward as viable alternative public transport options are introduced across the City then the decision to close Castle Street can be reviewed.

- Members asked whether wider air quality aspects, such as particulate matter, have been considered. The Director stated that the air quality consultants provided the broadest picture in terms of NO<sub>2</sub> and particulate matter and those issues will inform decisions on the wider transport network.
- Members asked what the alternative options were being looked at should funding for the scheme not come forward from Welsh Government and what effect this would have on future compliance. The Director stated that Welsh Government have been extremely supportive. The scheme is compliant and is reliant on the funding being made available.
- Officers were asked to comment on the veracity of the modelling undertaken. Officers stated that the modelling is comprehensive. Three sets of modelling has been undertaken. Modelling in its local context is used to inform decisions and design options. Local modelling also underpins the South East Wales regional model. A specialist consultant has been appointed to oversee the modelling and provide a summary report. Monitoring stations are in place on site and that data confirms the accuracy of the modelling. Modelling is also reviewed by the Welsh Government.
- Members asked whether consideration has been given to whether Option 2 would be reconsidered should NO<sub>2</sub> levels reach or exceed acceptable limits. Officers stated that live air quality monitoring in place in Castle Street would continue to monitor air quality. If NO<sub>2</sub> levels were breached then Cabinet would need to reconsider the matter. The Cabinet Member said that closing Castle Street at this time would have a negative impact on the neighbouring areas.
- Members asked whether any action has been taken to assess the potential negative impact the dissipation of traffic would have on people in surrounding areas. The Director stated that this would be a key consideration in any the modelling undertaken. The impact from the scheme on surround areas would be compliant. However, the authority is mindful that evidence is emerging that any level of air quality deterioration has a negative effect on health and some areas of the city, particularly inner city wards, are affected more than others. This will inform longer-term decisions about the transport network in the city.
- Responding to a question from the Committee regarding the potential for future non-compliance on the A48 in the Gabalfa area, the Head of Transport stated that air quality would be managed continuing to reallocate available road space to active travel and bus routes.
- Officers confirmed that traffic light signalling system is configured to keep traffic flow moving.

- The Cabinet Member advised that the Cardiff Bay metro link and associated redevelopment of Callaghan Square, and this impact that would have on the wider network, was the primary consideration affecting the Cabinet's decision.
- The Director stated that a conversation is ongoing with bus operators regarding a detailed plan for the strategic bus network and that would issue would be reported to the Committee at a future time.
- Members asked whether consideration would be given to rescheduling closures of the Butetown Tunnels. Officers stated that the closures of the Tunnels and any other decisions on the wider network would be reviewed in line with the reduced capacity in Callaghan Square and the development of the indoor area in Cardiff Bay.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

## 81 : CITY WIDE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing Members with an opportunity to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of a report due to be considered by the Cabinet on 27 April 2023 regarding the road user payment options.

Members were advised that the Council set out its 10-year sustainable transport strategy in the Transport White Paper. In order to achieve the objectives of the strategy more investment is required in transport infrastructure and services, and to address the challenges in relation to air quality, climate change, congestion and encourage growth in the Cardiff and the City Region.

Environmental levy options provide a potential opportunity for the Council to generate the revenue required to invest in transport and to increase walking, cycling and use of public transport. The Welsh Government has a strategy to develop a framework for fair and equitable road-user charging in Wales. The Wales Transport Strategy Llwybr Newydd framework will require secondary legislation. Developing a business case is necessary in order to work towards Cardiff Council and Welsh Government decisions on a future levy agreement.

Councillor Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member for Transport and Strategic Planning, Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment; Claire Moggridge, Head of Transport and Jason Dixon, Operational Manager for Transport Development were present for this item. Following a statement from the Cabinet Member the officers were invited to deliver a presentation on the report.

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

- Members considered that any consultation undertaken on road charging was may be skewed as road users were unlikely to be in favour of bringing in charges. Members asked how this would be addressed. The Director accepted the point. However, it was considered that residents would be more willing to pay for the improvements in transport and air quality that will be delivered. It was critical that the engagement process address the outcomes in terms of low carbon targets, public transport and public health in the city. The Cabinet Member stated that the consultation would be lengthy, multi-layered and representative of a range of sections of the community. It would focus on how to address the difficult challenges faced by everybody.
- Members questioned how the required improvements in public transport alternatives will be funded ahead of the introduction a road charging scheme. Members were advised that the improvements being introduced ahead of the road charging schemes are realistic and fundable.
- Members asked how much revenue would be required to deliver £1 bus fares on key routes. Officers were asked how confident they were that road charging can deliver the level of revenue required to fund such a scheme. Officers stated that some modelling has been undertaken regarding the cost of £1 fares on key routes but this was contingent on improvements to the strategic bus network and engagement with bus operators. This was likely to require several million pounds and will be clearly defined moving forward. No modelling has been undertaken regarding the income generated by the various road charging scheme options to date. This will be undertaken as part of the business case for the comparative schemes and presented to Cabinet in due course. It was intended that reduced fares will be applied across all operators.
- Members asked how a reduced fare scheme would continue to be funded if car usage was reduced across the city, as intended. The Director accepted that the introduction of charging would result in behaviour change. Forward projections around this would form part of the business case work. Road charging has been introduced in cities around the UK and there is evidence to inform that work.
- Officers were asked whether road charging would be applied across all areas of the city, as some rural areas did not have alternative public transport options. The Cabinet Member stated that no decision has been made regarding the road charging model but accepted that public transport in rural areas needed to be improved and that is why road charging is being considered.
- Members asked how the economically deprived and those under the age of 35, who traditionally engage less, are fully involved in the consultation process. The Cabinet Member stated that a Youth Panel will be convened and all materials will be translated into child friendly language. There will also be an emphasis on engaging with under-represented groups.

- Members referred to the South East Wales Transport Commission's recommendation that travel alternatives must exist before local changes can be considered. The Committee questioned whether – rather than reduced fares – more effort should be made on improving the reliability and frequency of services. The Cabinet Member agreed and stated both reduced fare and the frequency and reliability of services will be prioritised. The Director stated that the bus services are fragmented and in need of improvement as more people are deciding not to use the bus and are using cars instead. The proposals set out in report aim to address this and encourage more people to use the bus.
- Members asked whether delays in providing travel alternatives would effect the timeline for the proposals and whether any road charging scheme should be gradually phased in across the city. The Cabinet Member stated that a few key sustainable travel improvements would be introduced prior to the roll out of road charging.
- A Member asked whether the introduction of a 20mph speed limit on roads across the city has achieved an increased walking and cycling and a reduction in congestion and whether these measures would be given an opportunity to 'bed in' before charging for road use. The Director stated that the 20mph limit is still being rolled out. It was not suggested that a 20mph limit policy will deliver health, environmental and economic benefits on its own but it was part of a wider transport policy.
- A Member noted that a poll in the local media resulted in 87% of respondents were against of a congestion charge. The Director stated that the engagement process has not yet started but it was important for residents to understand what is being proposed and the benefits to them. The challenge is to get people to understand how they can engage in the strategic issues facing the city. The Cabinet Member considered that a meaningful dialogue was necessary so that people understand any measure and the outcomes the administration is seeking to achieve. The Cabinet Member stated that Cardiff was in the top 10 cities in the world at risk of flooding and for elected representatives not the try to address the climate emergency would, in his opinion, be a dereliction of duty.
- Members noted the legal implications set out in the report that advised that the scheme should be referred to as 'road user charging' as per the legislative requirements. The Director also asked Members to note that the term referred to the principle of road user charging and was not in reference to any particular type of road user charging scheme.
- Members considered that those residents on lower incomes were more likely to drive less efficient vehicles. They were also more likely to contribute the least to carbon emissions and therefore, they should not be disproportionately penalised

by any road user charging scheme.

- Members asked whether a guarantee that funding to support public transport alternatives and that there would be no further cuts to bus services, particularly in Cardiff North, could be provided. The Head of Transport stated BES funding is being reviewed by the Welsh Government and there is a risk bus services could be affected, irrespective of whether road user charging is implemented. However, funding will be available and engagement is ongoing with bus operators concerning services based on the commerciality of routes and bus route removal. No guarantees can be given that routes will not be removed at this stage but the intention is to provide the best possible network that will have the ability to grow and service all areas of Cardiff.
- Members asked whether the authority and Welsh Government engage with train operators to ensure that ticket prices are affordable. The Head of Transport stated that officers work closely with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales (TfW). Decisions on ticket prices is a matter for train operators. It was hoped that single ticketing that will enable people to switch between various modes would make the cost more affordable. The Director stated that bus and train operators have fixed costs so with fewer people using services fares must increase. The intention is to increase patronage on these services – to double the number of bus and train journeys by 2030 – which will alleviate the pressure on price rises.
- It was noted that, whilst Welsh Government is promoting a regional approach to road user charging, some neighbouring authorities were against the introduction of road user charging. Members asked whether Cardiff would become less competitive as a result. The Director stated that Cardiff has a different economy to its neighbours. Cities that introduce road user charging are notably within the group of most successful cities and road user charging is not a disincentive.
- Responding to a point made by the Committee, the Cabinet Member stated that road user charging was not about penalising drivers and there was no suggestion that all journeys should be made on public transport. Any charge will be modest and road users would benefit from less congested roads.
- A Member asked whether there were any concerns that the introduction of road user charging lacked a democratic mandate and whether that would then affect the level of public acceptance of any scheme introduced. The Cabinet Member stated that the administration has made a manifesto commitment to deliver the Transport White Paper where road user charging is discussed extensively.
- A Member asked why road user charging was being introduced at this point in time and hadn't been considered earlier. The Director stated that as part of the One Planet Cardiff Strategy the costing of the initiatives required to reach carbon

neutral have only recently been forthcoming. The sums required to reach carbon zero are very substantial but there aren't apparent until analysis of the carbon benefits is undertaken. Evidence around the health benefits and the long term impact of poor air quality is also continually emerging.

- Members asked whether any support would be provided to enable the taxi fleet and bus fleet switch to EV vehicles. The Director advised that there is insufficient funding available and any scheme would need to address these issues as a priority. In principle, funding from the road charging scheme could be ringfenced and match funded by UK or Welsh Government but no decisions have been made.
- Members noted the responsibility the Council has to consider the implications of any decision it makes under the Wellbeing of Future Act. Members asked how the views of young people would feed into the consultation and how future generations would be factored in. The Cabinet Member stated a conversation was necessary and that consideration would be needed on how the city would look for decades to come.
- Members noted that EV vehicles were not included on the list of exemptions set out in the report. The Director stated that a clean air zone would focus on EV vehicles but that would not be the only exemption as that may advantage one section of the community over others. The list of exemptions was provided as examples and was not exhaustive.
- Officers confirmed that the list of public transport improvements to be implemented before the introduction of road user charging was fluid and allows for the service to respond to feedback received during the public consultation phase.
- Officers stated that the priorities for the future were set out in the Transport 10 Year Plan, including the Eastern Bay Link, the Coryton Line, the City Line, Bus Strategy. All schemes are interlinked and all were priorities.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

82 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items.

83 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING



Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 10 May 2023.

The meeting terminated at 8.00 pm