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Date / Dyddiad: 10 July 2015

Chair, Environmental Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Services
Room 263
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Environmental Scrutiny Committee - 19th May 2015

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of the Committee following the meeting held on 19th May 2015 with regards to 'Environment & Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport Directorates – Performance Report Quarter – 2014/15' and 'Greener Grangetown – Final Consultation Phase'.

I would respond to each of the points raised as follows.

Environment & Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport Directorates – Performance Report Quarter – 2014/15

A Member asked for a breakdown of capital expenditure on individual renewable energy schemes and an income rate of return for each of the schemes. I would be grateful if you could arrange for this information to be provided to the Committee.

We have worked on three major Council funded renewables schemes in the past year. These are:

1. A Solar roof installation at the Lamby Way Depot site. The Capital expenditure was £216k and the gross annual income is expected to be £37k, made up of Feed-in-Tariff receipts, energy savings through direct supply to the buildings, and sell back of excess energy to the grid.
2. The Radyr Weir Hydro Electric Scheme. A contractor is now engaged to deliver this scheme during the current financial year. The Capital cost is expected to be £2.7m, and the anticipated gross annual income is estimated at £340k through feed in tariff and selling energy to the grid..
3. A Solar roof scheme in the Trowbridge housing estate. Solar panels have been installed at 100 residential properties, selected as having a suitable orientation to the sun and no overshadowing by trees etc. The total cost was £500k and gross annual income to the Council is expected to be

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£26.4k - in this case residents benefit directly from the energy produced so the rate of return to the Council is lower.

It should be noted that, as with most renewables, actual income is dependent on weather conditions and may vary from year to year.

The Member for Trowbridge explained that Council funding had been made available for the provision of insulating render for almost every street in Trowbridge with the exception of Cemaes Crescent; this had done nothing to improve his popularity locally. Could you please provide the Committee with detail of the criteria applied for insulating render grants in this area.

The External Wall Insulation project in Trowbridge is being delivered as a result of a successful grant funding application submitted to Welsh Government under the 'Maximising ECO' initiative for which the Council received funding to improve 247 properties. Applications for this funding stream were assessed against a range of qualifying criteria which sought to:

- Limit applications to a maximum volume of 250 properties
- Maintain a cohesive and logical whole-street approach where possible, and
- Target areas of multiple deprivation drawing on data in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) data which identifies Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA).

In responding to these criteria this particular grant bid focussed on specific streets in the southern half of the Trowbridge estate, enabling us to maximise application volume whilst building on work of a similar nature that the Council has completed under previous ARBED schemes.

Basing work on LSOA boundary lines sometimes means that scheme boundaries cut through streets and occasionally even pairs of semi-detached houses. To address this, and to seek to develop in a cohesive and logical whole street manner we have a process of reallocating funds from any properties within the scheme boundary that do not wish to participate. These funds are reallocated accordingly to adjoining streets and we intend to start with Cemaes Crescent and the southern end of Glan-Y-Mor Road due to close proximity to existing works.

Whilst this project is limited in its delivery volumes we are aware that a further c.350 hard-to-treat properties may remain in need of improvement on the Trowbridge estate and we will continue to explore potential funding opportunities to address these as they present themselves.

During the meeting you explained that for every £1 million borrowed for projects the Council had to pay back £80,000 per annum in interest. This equates to a figure of 8% which seems high. I would appreciate it if you explain what this £80,000 figure is used to cover, i.e. is it all an interest payment or a combination of interest and capital repayment.

The £80,000 figure is a general rule of thumb figure for the costs of borrowing £1m over a twenty five year period. It covers both interest costs p.a. and principal repayment costs p.a. The actual costs to the Council of any borrowing are

dependant on both the timing of any borrowing, the source and also rates of interest

At the meeting the new powers for the removal of letting boards was raised. It was explained that the new powers would come into force in November of December 2015 which would mean that letting agents would only be able to use compliant to let boards. The Director for Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic & Transport explained that he had a copy of a letter which confirmed the future implementation of these powers. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with a copy of this letter.

Attached is the Welsh Government letter confirming the Letting Boards decision, as requested.

The Committee has asked for details on the current average time for the planning service to process householder planning applications in Cardiff. I would appreciate it if you could provide the Committee with this information.

I can confirm that the average time taken is 61.78 days.

A Member asked for details on the quantity of illegal buildings determined for demolition by planning enforcement and the number that have actually been demolished. I'd be grateful if you could provide data on this for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

I can confirm that 16 had been determined for demolition, but 7 were subsequently removed. However, cases can cover more than one financial year due to serving of the notice being different to the compliance date.

Greener Grangetown – Final Consultation Phase

A Member asked if the Greener Grangetown project represented good value for money for the task payer. The Dwr Cymru / Welsh Water officer explained that the best way to evidence this was the cost benefit analysis exercise conducted by Dwr Cymru / Welsh Water; she offered to share this with the Members. I would appreciate it if you could obtain a copy of this document and share it with the Committee.

The feasibility study gives information about the cost benefit analysis (as attached).

A Member for Grangetown explained that there was a potential empty parking area at the Turner's Mansion site in Grangetown which could be used by the construction workers during the development phase of the project. Use of this site could reduce local parking pressures during the construction phase and prevent construction workers from having to take up resident and other local parking spaces.

In terms of using the empty car park, this would be a matter for the landowners and potentially Planning Development to determine if parking would be feasible at this location. In terms of road safety, a Contractor's compound off the highway would be preferable to one on-street.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,
Yn gwyir,



Councillor / Y Cynghorydd Ramesh Patel
Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Sustainability
Aelod Cabinet dros Drafnidiaeth, Cynllunio a Chynladwyedd

Enclosures

Cc to: Andrew Gregory, Director for Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic
 & Transport
 Tara King, Assistant Director for the Environment
 Ian Titherington, Lead Officer, Drainage
 Michelle Russ, Rainscape Regulation, Dwr Cymru / Welsh Water
 Martyn Evans, Strategy Advisor, Natural Resources Wales
 Paul Keeping, Operational Manager, Scrutiny Services
 Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager
 Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee