

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 MAY 2016

Present: County Councillor Mitchell(Chairperson)
County Councillors Clark, Chris Davis, Hill-John, Lomax, White
and Darren Williams

80 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

81 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

82 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2016 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

83 : CITY OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE - QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16

The Committee received the City Operations Directorate Quarter 4 2015/16 Performance Report. The report was supported by a summary of the overall Council performance, such as revenue projections, savings summaries, sickness rates and complaint levels. Members were asked to consider the performance data and feed in observations to support the Cabinet's consideration of the Quarter 4 performance report.

The performance report examined a wide number of issues including projected budget outturn; projected savings outturn; progress against directorate plan/corporate plan actions; progress against performance indicators; progress against challenges identified at Quarter 3, etc. A range of Council-wide performance information was also included, so that Members may benchmark against other service areas and Council performance as a whole.

The Committee was asked to note that the financial information in the report was only accurate for the first 11 months of the year as the data for month 12 was not available as the year-end accounting process had not yet been completed.

Members received a summary of the key observations identified in the performance report. The following 'Key Performance Indicators' were marked as 'Amber' and 'Red':

- PLA/004(a) – The percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks (Red)
- PLA/004(c) – The percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within 8 weeks (Amber)

It was noted that four of the indicators published in the City Operations Directorate are annual and one is new, therefore, no results are available for these as the data is still being collected, interrogated and verified.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Ramesh Patel, Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability; Councillor Bob Derbyshire, Cabinet Member for the Environment; Andrew Gregory, Corporate Director; David Lowe, Operational Manager. Councillor Derbyshire made a brief statement. Councillor Derbyshire stated that the Directorate's Performance Indicators were generally moving in the right direction and were improving on the previous year's results. Whilst, there was still room for further improvement, the results were positive.

David Lowe was invited to deliver a [presentation](#) on the Environment aspects of the report. Members were invited to comment, raise questions or seek clarification on the information provided. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Committee sought clarification for the difference the recycling figures for Q1 in the report (57%) and in the presentation (64%). Officers agreed to verify the reason for this variation and report back to the Committee.
- Officers confirmed that whilst the authority was currently paying for glass recyclables to be removed and that until such glass is removed from the MERF it did not count towards the recycling figures.
- Responding to a question from the Committee, Officers stated that the move towards stronger enforcement for environment breaches was on schedule. The Cabinet has received a report on these proposals. The project would be phased in during the next 3 to 6 months. Members were advised that an online register providing details of the licences issued for skips on the highway was to be produced as part of the process.
- A Member sought clarification on a point regarding the classification of fly tipping and waste presentation in terms of enforcement. At a previous meeting officers had advised that this information was easy to capture but a response to a question asked at Council stated that the data was not collected. Officers stated that if education or enforcement action was taken as a result of the incorrect presentation of waste then there would be a record. Officers agreed to provide further clarification.
- The Committee considered that the incorrect presentation of waste was an important issue. Members suggested that it would be useful to receive a report which identified areas where there would be waste presentation problems and the action taken by the service area to address these issues. This would enable trends to be identified and resources to be used in a more focussed manner. The Cabinet Member stated that this was an issue where the service area could improve. The Cabinet Member agreed to provide details of the number of warning letters, notices and fines had been issued within each ward of the City during a specified time period. The Committee noted that similar data for parking notices was routinely provided to all Members.
- Members asked why there was a variation in the Q1 figure for PI WMT/004b – the percentage of waste collected sent to landfill – in the report (12.2%) and in the

presentation (4.7%). Officers stated that the latest figures were provided in the presentation and agreed to provide further clarification. The Cabinet Member stated that the amount of waste collected and sent to landfill would be virtually zero from April 2016 as 100% of waste would be sent to the energy from waste facility.

- Members requested an update on the 'Bin Info' app which would be used to replace the 'Tidy Text' scheme. Members were advised that the app was live. All 'Tidy Text' subscribers will soon receive a text message advising them to download the 'Bin Info' app. The Bin Info app would cost the authority £10k per annum.

Andrew Gregory was invited to deliver a [presentation](#) on the Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic and Transportation aspects of the report. Members were invited to comment, raise questions or seek clarification on the information provided. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Cabinet Member confirmed that officers would work with developers to develop the road network and metro system. The LDP is clear on this point. Developers will also need to make financial contributions to such schemes. The authority has also developed a design template for developers to produce sustainable communities; these would include segregated cycle routes and public transport in their design. The Metro scheme was controlled by the Welsh Government and would be assisted greatly by the City Deal.
- Members asked whether Performance Indicators in the Planning Department were realistic and whether there was any scope for further increasing income. Members were advised that Planning PIs are realistic and are being monitored weekly. Officers accepted that staff were pressurised by that pressure was being used to help staff think about what they do and guide processes. Fees were increased recently and the authority was now able to charge for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs).
- In response to a question from the Committee, officers stated that the development of SPGs would assist Planning enforcement officers proactively tackle some of the issues discussed previously by the Committee. The Cabinet Member advised that he was more than happy to address local issues with Ward Members.
- A Member suggested that it was not possible for everyone to view planning applications via the online portal. Furthermore, it was not always possible for every individual to make representations via email and therefore it was difficult for some members of the public to engage in the planning application process. Officers agreed to confirm whether it was possible to view planning applications in person at County Hall.

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

The Committee received a report on the draft 'Highway Asset Investment Strategy', which aims to define a strategic long-term approach to highway maintenance funding by outlining a series of service and funding options. The Committee was asked to consider the content of the strategy, and the future budget funding proposals, prior to the Strategy being presented to the Cabinet.

The report included a summary of the background to the Highway Asset Investment Strategy (HAIS). The total replacement cost of the highways asset in Cardiff was estimated to be approximately £2.3 billion. Traditionally Highways Maintenance budgets have been set on an annual basis, which creates a short-term reactive approach to management and improvement. The HAIS seeks to adopt a long-term approach to Highway Maintenance based on sound Asset Management principles as endorsed by the Welsh Government and the CCS Wales (County Surveyors Society Wales).

Members were asked to note that the UK Government was proposing to make £575 million available between 2015 and 2021 to improve highway infrastructure across the whole network. The distribution of this grant would be aimed at authorities demonstrating an existing sound asset management approach to highway maintenance. The HAIS advocates such an approach.

Members were advised that the historic approach to Highway Maintenance has resulted in fluctuating budgets. This prevents to development of a long term investment strategy which in turn leads to the following issues:

- Highway assets are managed separately thus limiting efficiency opportunities;
- Inability to set long-term targets and define acceptable backlogs, e.g. road condition;
- Levels of service vary over the short-term;
- It will limit the opportunity to adopt a long term strategic approach thus creating the situation where the maintenance backlog continually increases.

Members were requested to appreciate the principle that the level of funding for Highway Maintenance has a direct correlation to the future condition of the asset, i.e. the lower the level of funding, the poorer the condition of the asset and the faster its deterioration. The report included future forecasts of carriageway condition based on different levels of investment over a period of 20 years. The Committee noted that any investment less than 'Steady State' would result in deteriorating condition and consequential increase in maintenance backlog over time.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Ramesh Patel, Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning and Sustainability; Andrew Gregory, Corporate Director; Gary Brown, Operational Manager – Assets, Engineering and Operations; and Andrew Greener, Team Leader, Assets.

Andrew Gregory made a brief statement. The Committee was advised that it was a service area priority to take a long-term view of the Authority's biggest asset. The condition of the asset; the condition of the carriageway, was an important issue for the public and could be used to gauge how the Council was performing. The Highway Asset Investment Strategy sets out how the asset can be maintained. The next stage is to agree how the Strategy it to be funded.

Gary Brown was invited to deliver a [presentation](#) on the Highway Asset Investment Strategy. The Committee was invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Cabinet Member advised that he would continue to lobby the Welsh Government for additional funding to address problems with the deteriorating conditions of the capital's roads.
- Officers advised that many roads were deteriorating due to the composition of the materials used during the construction of the most recent roads. The standard of materials used in the UK was less robust than that used on the continent. It was stated that it is still possible to rectify these problems if the service area is able to begin repairs in time, though high speed routes would take longer and be more expensive to repair. Older road surfaces were more robust - repairs are now being carried out using equivalent materials with a longer life in order to prevent further deterioration of the carriageway.
- Members asked whether buses and road calming features were causing deterioration to the road surface. Officers agreed that there was a recognisable problem caused by heavy loading on the road surface on traffic calming features. The Cabinet Member stated that the proposed 20mph zones in the City would not require traffic calming features. The Cabinet Member was unable to give an indication of the likely level of savings that would be achieved if such traffic calming features are removed from 20mph zones.
- Members asked whether the Highway Asset Investment Strategy could be funded from parking/moving traffic offences fines. Officers stated that, potentially, income could be aligned with the HAIS but no agreement has been reached. The Cabinet Member stated that there was huge demand for further investment in cameras and an additional camera car to aid enforcement in the City.
- Responding to a point made by a Member of the Committee, the Cabinet Member stated that no comments had been received from South Wales Police as part of the 20mph pilot scheme in Cathays regarding traffic calming features in the area. South Wales Police had been given an opportunity to provide feedback – none was received.
- Officers confirmed that the proposals for 'steady state' investment strategy applied to the authority's pavements also.
- The Cabinet Member indicated that there was some evidence to suggest that flashing speed signs were effective. Some signs also record data so it was possible to study the data in order to gauge the effectiveness of the signs.
- Officer stated that the authority was taking a proactive approach to gully cleansing and drain clearing in accordance with flood management requirements.

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

The Committee received the draft Environmental Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2015/16. The report reflected the work of the Committee during the previous 12 months. Members were asked to provide feedback or comment on the draft annual report.

AGREED – That the Environmental Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2015/16 be approved.

86 : 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.

87 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 14 June 2016.

The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm