

Ref: RDB/PM/RP/17.05.16

24 June 2016

Councillor Ramesh Patel
Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Sustainability
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff CF10 4UW



Dear Councillor Patel

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 17 May 2016

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 17 May 2016. As you are aware the meeting considered items titled 'City Operations – Quarter 4 Performance' and 'Highway Asset Investment Strategy'. The comments and observations made by Members following these items are set out in this letter.

City Operations – Quarter 4 Performance

- Members would like to congratulate the City Operations Directorate for delivering a budget surplus of £3,000 during the financial year 2015/16. They feel that this is an excellent achievement in the current financial climate. The Committee did, however, note the comments made by the Director for City Operations on the varied performance across the City Operations Directorate as a whole. For example, he mentioned that certain parts of Waste Services still had sickness rates in excess of 18 days per person per annum.

With this in mind I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with the sickness, budget and savings details on a service by service basis for all of the City Operations Directorate for 2015/16. This I feel will provide the Committee with a greater insight into the stronger and weaker

performing parts of the City Operations Directorate, which will in turn help inform how we identify items for future scrutiny. Please note that the letter to the Cabinet Member for the Environment also asks for this information.

- At the meeting the Director for City Operations once again explained that performance indicators PLA/004 (a) (percentage of major planning applications determined during the year within 13 weeks) and PLA/004 (c) (percentage of householder planning applications determined during the year within eight weeks) were once again rated “Red” and “Amber” respectively. The Committee were mindful that significant improvements had previously been promised for Quarter 4 2015/16 and Quarter 1 2016/17. They note that the Director for City Operations is confident of turning both of these indicators to “Green” in time for the Quarter 1 Performance report for 2016/17, and will therefore monitor progress with interest.
- During the meeting there was some concern around the extent to which planning enforcement is carried out in Cardiff, with particular reference to the frequency with which demolition work is carried out against illegal buildings that have been determined for demolition. Reference was made to the letter sent to you after your visit to Environmental Scrutiny Committee on 19 May 2015, which asked for “details on the quantity of illegal buildings determined for demolition by planning enforcement and the number that have actually been demolished for 2013/14 and 2014/15”. In reply you explained that “16 had been determined for demolition, but 7 were subsequently removed.”

I would be grateful if you could confirm in writing how many of the nine properties still on the list have actually been demolished, and the current status of the properties which have not been demolished.

- At the meeting there was some concern around the public availability of planning application documents. A Member was of the opinion that it was no longer possible for the public to view hard copies of planning applications at sites like City Hall, and the Council does not currently

accept planning objections by email or in any other written format. It was felt that if this were the case then the process could discriminate against certain groups, for example, older people. The Director for City Operations has agreed to look into the matter, therefore, I would be grateful if his findings could be confirmed in your reply to this letter.

Highway Asset Investment Strategy

- The Environmental Scrutiny Committee would like to endorse the recommendation made in the Cabinet report to implement a steady state approach to the management of the Highway Asset in Cardiff. Members felt that this longer term planning approach was the most sensible option currently available to the Council. This position is consistent with the conclusions the Committee made in September 2014 when they reviewed an earlier version of the Highway Asset Investment Strategy.
- A Member questioned when work would begin on the Greener Grangetown project and you explained that work was due to start imminently. I would be grateful if you could provide a detailed timeline to include when the work would begin, and when it is anticipated that it will be completed.
- Members felt that the implementation of 20 mph zones in Cardiff had been a positive thing, particularly as the lower speed limit reduces the chance of serious injury in a road traffic accident or collision. The Committee are also keen to gain a better understanding of the benefits of the 20mph speed limits in terms of preserving the quality of the Highway Asset and reducing general maintenance requirements. For example, Members were of the view that the reduced need to brake or accelerate would place less pressure on the actual highway asset, resulting in a longer deterioration period. I would be interested in finding out if any cost benefit analysis has been carried out which reflects the financial impact of implementing 20mph

zones on the Highway Asset. If you have access to a report of this type I would be grateful if you could share this with the Committee.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the requests made in this letter.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. D. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Councillor Paul Mitchell
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

Andrew Gregory, Director for City Operations
Tara King, Assistant Director for City Operations
Matthew Wakelam – Operational Manager, Infrastructure & Operations
James Clemence – Head of Planning
Simon Gilbert – Operational Manager, Development Management (Strategic & Place Making)
Paul Carter – Head of Transport
Paul Keeping – Operational Manager, Scrutiny Services
David Marr – Interim Monitoring Officer
Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Michael Michael, Chair of Cardiff's Planning Committee