

Ref: RDB/PM/BD/03.02.15

5th February 2015

Councillor Bob Derbyshire,
Cabinet Member for the Environment,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Derbyshire,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 3rd February 2015

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 3rd February 2015. As you are aware the meeting considered the “Draft Corporate Plan 2015 – 2017 & 2015/16 Draft Budget Proposals.” In reviewing these proposals the Committee used the following documents to set the context of the discussion:

- Draft Corporate Plan – 2015 - 17;
- Equality Impact Assessments;
- Draft Budget Proposals;
- Capital Programme;
- Employee Budget Implications Table;
- Results of the Cardiff Debate consultation – ‘Changes for Cardiff – Consultation Results & Feedback Report on the City of Cardiff Council’s 2015/16 Budget Proposals’.

This letter contains the recommendations, observations and requests for information agreed by Members during the Way Forward at the end of the meeting, which we hope will be of assistance to you in shaping the final budget recommendations. The proposals that are allocated against the Environment Directorate and which fall within the scope of your portfolio are listed below:

ENV1- Full year effect of 2014/15 actions includes efficiencies taken with collections / cleansing & enforcement where they were part completed in 2014/15 and the benefits roll into 2015/16;

ENV2 – In House improvements (Council wide) & Neighbourhood Services (Council wide);

ENV4 – Redesign of cleansing as part of Neighbourhood Services (Environment only).

- The Committee were concerned at the scale of the £1.607 million saving required from in house modification and developing the Neighbourhood Services project. While they acknowledge that the idea behind this proposal is sound they question how quickly it can be achieved, particularly as the trial for the Neighbourhood Services project has only just started. Members hope that this new approach delivers quick efficiencies and they will monitor the progress of this work closely.
- Members would be grateful if you could arrange a visit for them to look at the work of the Neighbourhood Services pilot in the near future. This would provide the Committee with a greater understanding of the work of the proposed Neighbourhood Services teams.
- The group felt that the Council should continue to push to increase income from fines for offences such as littering and dog fouling. They would encourage you to use existing resources from within the enforcement team and other Council staff who are in a practical position to issue fines on a regular basis.

ENV5 – Revised Waste Strategy

- The Committee recognises the need for the Council to increase recycling rates and in particular reduce the amount of residual waste produced per household in Cardiff. They look forward to reviewing the Draft Waste Management Strategy proposals at their meeting on the 10th March.

ENV6 – Waste Disposal interim contract & Prosiect Gwyrdd

- The Committee were satisfied that the £3.572 million saving produced from disposing of waste at the Viridor energy from waste facility was

achievable. They were reassured that legal, technical and financial due diligence had been undertaken by the Council (and indeed other neighbouring authorities) and that you and officers were confident that the proposal was robust. The Committee will monitor this savings proposal with interest.

ENV7 – Increasing control of the green bag and food liner provision and distribution

- The Committee were broadly supportive of this proposal and acknowledge that greater control of how green bags in Cardiff are distributed needs to be achieved. Allowing waste collection rounds to distribute the green bags and then recording where they have been allocated would seem a sensible way forward; it would in effect be returning to a system which worked well several years ago.
- Members ask that consideration be given to taking a slightly different approach to the distribution of bags in high density property areas. It was highlighted that the more affluent areas of the city already achieve 70% plus recycling rates while some of the high density property areas in the inner city struggle to reach 20%. They believe that the Council should make it as easy as possible for people in the high density property areas in the inner city to access green bags and, therefore, they should be available from both the waste collection rounds and other suitable locations, for example, shops, religious centres and other community facilities. Restricting the access to bags in these areas could make the problem worse.

ENV9 – Domestic Collections Efficiencies

- When discussing how domestic collection efficiencies could be achieved a Member explained that in Germany waste collection vehicles operate using a mechanical arm to pick up the wheelie bins during the round. This dramatically reduces the number of staff needed to operate a collection round and appears to be very cost effective. The Committee would like you and the Environment Directorate to investigate this option and provide appropriate feedback on the matter.

ENV10 – Waste Disposal – Stop Post Sort

- Members understand why the Council has to stop the post sort of materials at Household Waste Recycling Centres and accept the argument that the approach presents a risk in terms of achieving the 58% recycling targets. They agree with your view that this change needs to be monitored against the performance of recycling targets and that if required at a later date post sort could need to be reintroduced. The Committee will closely monitor this proposal during 2015/16.

ENV11 – Remaining two Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) with reduced operating days and hours

- The Committee are unable to support the proposed £42,000 saving for reducing the opening times for the two Household Waste Recycling Centres. The main reasons for this are:
 - They believe that the disruption caused by varying the hours of the two 'part time' sites would cause uncertainty; this would result in an increase in activities like fly tipping which would create additional cost for the Council. In particular there was some concern that waste could be dumped outside the entrance of the Household Waste Recycling Centres creating a removal cost and making access to the site difficult.
 - At a time when we need to achieve a 58% recycling target we should avoid confusing the public as to where and when materials can be recycled. Every little helps and ultimately small measures will help the Council achieve the tough recycling target and avoid potential Welsh Government fines.
 - As no comprehensive traffic surveys have been completed for the sites. Members question how the Council has managed to put forward a proposal which would drive increased traffic into one site during the opening and closing overlap period between the sites. They urge you to complete a detailed traffic survey on both sites before finalising any decision.

- The Committee note that a final decision for a long term operating model for Household Waste Recycling Centres will be taken before the end of this calendar year. Members of the Committee look forward to this announcement and would like to undertake pre decision scrutiny on the subject.
- The Committee recommended that re-use repair and recycle initiatives with third sector and other groups be investigated with redundant sites being considered or promoted to provide communities with this service.

**Line 58 – New Capital Schemes – Restricting Residual Waste –
Changing the current 240 litre bins to 140 litre bins**

- Members agree that swapping 240 litre bins for 140 litre bins could be an effective way of getting some people to increase their recycling. The capital programme allocates £2.4 million for the purchase of the new bins; it is assumed that the old bins would be recycled. The Committee ask you to carefully consider how and where new bins need to be allocated to maximise results. There would be little point in providing someone who takes over a month to fill their 240 litre bin with a 140 litre bin as the recycling gain would probably be negligible. In addition there are many cases like this where the 240 litre bins are in good condition and so do not need replacing – incurring an unnecessary cost at this financially challenging time would seem to be inadvisable. Please note that the assertion that all of these bins were at the end of their working life was not accepted or supported by evidence.

Financial Pressures – Line 5 – Waste Strategy & Collection Changes

- The Committee welcome the additional £500,000 allocated to supporting the Waste Strategy changes during 2015/16. It is clear that significant changes will need to take place to help the Council reach the 58% recycling targets set for 2015/16. These significant changes will only work if supported by an extensive education campaign and the additional funds will add valuable support to this effort.

- In terms of the Waste Strategy changes the Committee are clear that additional targeted systems and support should be directed at the low recycling performance areas, i.e. the high density property areas in the inner city. This would in effect mean treating the low performing areas differently to those meeting or exceeding target. Members feel that such an approach represents the best opportunity to make additional recycling gains and reach the 58% recycling target for 2015/16.

Public Consultation Feedback

- The 'Changes for Cardiff – Results & Feedback Report' identified that the respondents to the consultation concluded that:
 - *Do you agree to withdraw the free entitlement to bulky item collections? – 51.7% said yes; 36.6% said no and 11.8% were not sure.*
 - *Do you agree to an increase in existing charges for bulky item collections? – 50.1% said yes; 35.2% said no and 14.8% were not sure.*

The Committee believe that a change to the charging structure for the collection of bulky waste would lead to an increase in the amount of fly tipping in Cardiff at a time when the Council appears to be doing a good job in managing the problem. Members ask if you could avoid making any changes to the charging structure for the collection of bulky items in the short to medium term.

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

Regards,



Councillor Paul Mitchell
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc to:

Councillor Graham Hinchey, Cabinet Member – Corporate Services & Performance

Jane Forshaw, Director for the Environment

Tara King, Assistant Director for the Environment

Christine Salter, Corporate Director Resources

Marcia Sinfield, Operational Manager – Projects & Technical Accountant

Paul Keeping, Operational Manager, Scrutiny Services

Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Office Manager

Cheryl Cornelius, Cabinet Support Manager

Councillor Nigel Howells, Chair of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee

Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee