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10 September 2019

Councillor Michael Michael,  
Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment,  
County Hall,  
Atlantic Wharf,  
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Michael,

### **Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019**

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2019 to discuss the item on the 'Cardiff Food Strategy'. The comments and observations made by Members on the areas relevant to your portfolio of responsibility are set out in this letter.

#### **Cardiff Food Strategy**

**Hydroponic Project** - At the start of the meeting you mentioned the hydroponic food growing project that was being developed in Cardiff and extended an invite to the Committee to visit the scheme. Members welcome the invite and ask that you and the officers liaise with the scrutiny services to arrange the visit.

**Hydroponic Hub** – Members found the idea of a 'Hydroponic Hub' very interesting, particularly as such a venture could provide an opportunity for local residents to grow a range of produce out of season. Cardiff has a very established allotment community, and the Committee believe that many of these would welcome an out of season opportunity to grow food. On this basis we recommend that if the Council does propose developing a 'Hydroponic Hub' then it should engage with the allotment community to establish interest and commitment to take such a project forward.

**Local Food Market** – Members feel that Cardiff has a strong local food community, but lacks a permanent base where the local food offer can be

showcased. A Member pointed out that the city does not have an equivalent of Borough Market, and that such a facility would add sustainability, economic and tourism benefits. The Committee would ask you to look into this to establish if a suitable location exists in the city centre, and if one does to look into the feasibility of developing such a venue.

**New Retailer Enforcement** - A Member commented that a few local food shops he was familiar with had been prevented from displaying produce and offers on the pavement edge and / or adjacent to their shops, for example, placing fruit and veg stands on the pavement and putting out 'A Frames' to display offers. To their cost these responsible retailers played by the rules only to see new businesses appear overnight, breach the same rules and then disappear. This left the established retailers very frustrated at the lack of Council enforcement against the less scrupulous retailers. The Member has, therefore, asked if you could review what can be done to improve enforcement against new retailers who consistently breach these rules.

**Council Food Establishments – Healthy Eating Options** - During the meeting I commented on the lack of healthy food options at County Hall and other staff canteens, and then asked what was being done to improve the healthy eating offer for staff. When the refurbished County Hall canteen was being launched I was told that it would be promoting a number of healthy eating options, however, when visiting it recently I was disappointed not to see anything healthy on the menu. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with details of future healthy eating options to be introduced at County Hall and other Council food establishments, for example, suggested healthy eating menu options and promotions.

**Monitoring the Cardiff Food Strategy** - The Cardiff Food Strategy includes an action plan that sets out a wide range of tasks that the Council will look to deliver in the short, medium or long term. It was not clear from the document how these targets and standards would be monitored, nor indeed what level of resource will be required to deliver any of the actions. It would be appreciated if you could confirm the monitoring arrangements that have been put in place to deliver this plan, along with details of the required resources.

**Food for Life & Soil Association Award** - At the meeting a Member asked if the Council was doing anything with the 'Food for Life' or the 'Soil Association Award'. I would be grateful if you could confirm if the Council intends to link into either of these schemes, and if it is, what it plans to do.

**Local Food Quality Mark** - The Committee supports the idea of creating a local food quality mark for Cardiff. This could be introduced to identify locally produced food that meets an agreed standard. It would help local food growers, support the local economy and incentivise sustainability. Such an initiative should be cost effective, therefore, the Committee would encourage you to develop this idea in partnership with local food producers / retailers and the wider community.

**Beef** - During the meeting a Member suggested that the Council should probably play a greater role in determining what was consumed at Council establishments and in school canteens. For example, beef, beef and beef had dominated the menu at his daughter's school for the last three days. He went on to highlight the current environmental crisis facing the planet, making reference to the negative impact that the beef industry has on large parts of the world. He continued by suggesting that the Council should use its influence in the procurement process to understand where our beef came from, for example, providing assurance that it was locally produced and not a product of Brazil where huge deforestation is taking place to enable production. He concluded by suggesting that the Council needed to be sure of the carbon footprint of the food that it procures and consumes. The Committee agrees with this suggestion and encourages the Council to:

- Do all it can to produce a greener menu that supports the Council's wider carbon reduction commitment.
- Encourage schools to do more to promote healthy eating on the curriculum, while at the same time promoting food sustainability.

**Linking Council Strategies** – A comment was made at the meeting that the Council often failed to link up its own strategies. A Member explained that the

Council had recent published a property disposal strategy that had brought forward the sale of several retail outlets in district shopping centres. These it was assumed would be sold to private landlords who would increase the rent making it increasingly difficult for small local retailers to operate. Such a strategy was in direct contrast to the Cardiff Food Strategy that is looking to achieve lots of things, including the reduction and removal of food deserts and swamps – this is something that can only be done if suitable premises exist in these areas. The Committee agrees with this statement and asks that the Council does all that it can to ensure that there is clear linkage between policies / strategies. The aims and objectives of one policy should not contradict those of another.

**Southern Arc Data** - During the meeting, Members were told about the significant difference in life expectancy between people living in the Southern Arc and more affluent parts of Cardiff. The report explained that for men this is 11 years and for women 9 years, rising to 24 years for men and 22 years for women in relation to healthy life expectancy. Diet, both in terms of food options available and food consumed, has a part to play in this difference in life expectancy. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with the source of the information and data that was used to support this statement.

**Food Deserts & Swamps** – The item on the Cardiff Food Strategy highlighted a number of issues, including food deserts and swamps. Members are supportive of the work that you plan to take to remove / reduce these in Cardiff, therefore, please confirm in detail exactly what the Council proposes to do to address the issue.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the content of this letter.

Regards,

Handwritten signature of Ramesh Patel in black ink.

Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Andrew Gregory - Director of Planning, Transport & Environment
- Gareth Harcombe – Commercial Manager, Energy & Sustainability
- Liz Lambert - Group Leader, Sustainable Development
- Davina Fiore - Director of Governance & Legal Services
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee