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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting MONDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2023, 5.00 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

8 **Correspondence Following the Committee Meeting**(Pages 3 - 14)

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Ref: Scrutiny/Env/27/03/2023

Date: 1st March 2023



Councillor Chris Weaver

Dear Councillors,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 27th February 2023.

DRAFT BUDGET 2023/24 & DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2026

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank you, your Cabinet colleagues and officers for attending Committee to facilitate our consideration of the Draft Budget 2023/24 and the Draft Corporate Plan 2023-26.

The meeting initially considered the Corporate Overview and was followed by scrutiny of the draft budget proposals and sections of the draft Corporate Plan relevant to the terms of reference of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee. At the meeting Members had the opportunity to question the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders and supporting officers on their draft budget and Corporate Plan proposals for the coming year. Members agreed that I pass on the following observations to inform Cabinet discussion later this week. You will find our recommendations and requests, listed at the end of the letter.

Corporate Overview

Members sought assurance that the 'grant' funding identified in the papers would be available and not withdrawn. Officers confirmed that the Welsh Government (WG) was the primary source of grant funding and that it was usually made available for a specific purpose e.g. highways and down to successful bidding. However, they acknowledged that this would need to be kept under review and assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Plan are refreshed.

The Committee asked about the causes of the £1.7m overspend in Recycling & Neighbourhood Services and it was noted that the volatility in the recycle

market which had been producing good prices early in the year but had now reduced.

Members asked about corporate advice in relation to setting fees and charges as there appears to be no consistent rationale in the application of increases. Finance Officers clarified that each directorate would have their own approach and strategy to managing fees and charges and that there were different components that require consideration i.e. fees and charges are not necessarily about income generation but could be used to drive behaviour change.

Cllr Wild - Recycling & Neighbourhood Services

Members raised concerns that the proposed closure of the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) could result in additional fly tipping. Officers clarified that data from the booking system in place suggests that the days used least are at the start of the week i.e., Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, however closing on a Monday would be avoided due to the number of Bank Holidays that fall on this day. Officers also noted that both centres would not be closed on the same day ensuring access to a centre 7 days a week. The committee asked about working hours for staff affected by the proposed closures and officers reassured members that currently staff are working more than their contracted hours so they will be working with all concerned to reduce hours to contracted levels.

Officers were asked about progress in relation to the HWRC proposals for the north of the city given the increasing capital allocation in forthcoming years, however the absence of revenue funding to support a new/additional service was also noted. Members were informed that the proposal for a service in the north of the city would not be the same model as those at Lamby Way and Bessemer Close. It is proposed that the new service would be run in partnership with third sector partners, e.g. Keep Wales Tidy, Benthyc, NU Life and would provide a broader range of services that would include repair and reuse of larger items. A sustainable model is being investigated similar to the service operated in [Manchester](#). The committee were reassured that this

facility remains a priority for the Cabinet and that an appropriate site is being sought.

The committee asked about the possible continuation of the 'pop-up' recycling centres. Officers commented that they had been successful initially, however, going forward they were looking to provide a mobile targeted service at locations throughout the year.

Members noted concerns regarding the roll-out of the separated waste service to HMOs and flats with communal bin areas, officers noted that the roll out to these types of dwelling is to follow, and investigations are ongoing into available types of community bins.

The committee noted £815,00 of capital funding over two years for Waste Recycling and Collection Review for '*implementation of approved options arising from a review of the Recycling Service Strategy that meets current and future targets and aspirations,*' and asked for further information on what will be funded. Officers clarified that it will be used to fund the purchase of the reusable bags, communications, officer support during the roll-out and implementing any lessons learnt from the pilots across the city.

It was also noted that the budget for vehicles will not change and the model going forward will be for separate vehicles to collect the separated waste as this will retain the quality of recyclable materials, i.e., 'Separate vehicles for glass, food wastes plastics / cardboard & paper. However, segregated vehicle will be used in less densely populated areas. It was also confirmed that vehicles are not purchased but hired, so as vehicle needs change during roll-out the vehicles used can be changed.

Members sought clarification regarding the waste collection charges being proposed, and in particular lines 253 and 254 below:

No.	Income Source	Current Charge	Proposed Price Change	% Change	Effective Date	Comment
253	Bulky Item Collections	£12.50 for every 2 items	£7.50	60%	1 April 2023	The proposed new charge is £20.00
254	Bulky Item Collection Booking Fee	New Charge - See Comment				New charge for 2023-24. The proposed charge is £5.00

Officers appeared not to be aware of 60% rise, from £12.50 to £20.00, for every two items, however, they confirmed that the booking fee relates to items that a free to be collected in an attempt to prevent the non-presentation of items when a vehicle has been arranged to collect them.

The Committee noted the provision of bottled water in schools and asked about the environmental impact. Officers noted that 'refill' sites were being piloted across the city and work was ongoing with schools too. They also noted that if the bottles were disposed of appropriately, they can be recycled.

Cllr Wild - Climate Change

Members asked about the provision of 'real-time' air quality monitoring, officers responded confirming that they are looking to increase the network of monitoring site and Air Quality Monitoring Areas and that further work will be undertaken following recruitment to a vacant post.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the £300,000 (one off FRM) being made available to enable taxis to transition to cleaner diesel due to the cost of electric vehicles, due to the limited number of licences being granted. Officers confirmed that a wider taxi strategy that will support the funding is being developed to incentivise a low carbon taxi fleet, and that any outcomes from the consultation currently in progress will be taken into consideration. It was also noted that the structure of the taxi trade needs to be reviewed to maximise benefits.

An accessible affordable electric vehicle charging structure was also raised an issue that impacts on the delivery of an EV taxi fleet. Officers informed the Committee that suitable locations for charging stations are being sought that will hopefully meet the needs of taxi drivers.

Clr De'Ath - Transport & Strategic Planning

The Youth Council representative noted concerns regarding the increase in costs related to bereavement services and asked if there was any support for low-income families. Officers informed members that costs have been benchmarked against other local authorities and cities and that the increased costs remain below the median, however, details of an initiative in relation to low-costs services will be provided.

Members noted the differential in cost between 1st and 2nd residential parking permits has reduced and therefore the incentive not to have a second car also. Again, officers noted that a bench- marking exercise had been undertaken when setting the new charges and that they remain below the average charge for other local authorities and cities, they also stated that charges in relation to parking permits have not risen for a number of years.

Members also asked if in future the cost of permits could be linked to emissions/size of vehicle? It was noted that this would be complex and that it may disadvantage those unable to afford an electric vehicle.

Parking charges across the city were highlighted and officers asked how the city compares. It was confirmed that benchmarking had been undertake and that charge across the city are aiming to be at or below the average over a number of years as historically they have been cheap, however there is a balance as they need to be at a level that does not discourage visitors to the city.

The Committee noted that a potential unintended consequence of the reduction of school crossing patrols (PTEE4) was an increase in traffic i.e., more parents dropping children off. Officers clarified that many crossings and locations have improved safety and that there was a possible communications issue.

Both Members and officers noted concerns in relation to bus services and the withdrawal of WG funding that had been made available following the COVID pandemic. Officers note that the Transport Team were looking at mitigation actions in an attempt to reduce the impact to services

Members noted that the fees for Pre Application Advice (lines 457 -461) appear to be undervalued for a professional service and that no increase is proposed. Officers confirmed that some fees are statutory prescribed by WG, however they were investigation ways to introduces supplementary charges for larger schemes and were working with developers.

The committee sought clarification regarding PTEE14, and whether it could be made compulsory and not discretionary as stated in the text below:

Drainage - Sustainable Drainage Approval Body substantial price increase to Pre Application -Discretionary charge to be increased taking into account benchmarking with other Local Authorities. Only possible on pre-application as this is the discretionary charge. There is a risk that increasing the charge may result in reduction in the take up of the service but benchmarking gives some confidence on this point.

To confirm a response to the letter which responds to the following points is requested:

- Please provide clarification in relation to line 253 regarding proposed increase in charges for bulky waste collections.
- Further details in relation to low cost bereavement services for low-income families.
- Clarification in relation to PTEE14

No formal recommendations were made.

Once again thank you once more for attending Committee and for considering our comments and observations.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Owen Jones

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc: *Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee*

Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member, Climate Change

Cllr Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member Transport & Strategic Planning

Cllr Joel Williams, Chair of PRAP

Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources

Ian Allwood, Head of Finance

Neil Hanratty, Director, Economic Development

Andrew Gregory, Director, Planning, Transport & Environment

Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director, Street Scene

Cllr Adrian Robson, Group Leader, Conservatives

Cllr Andrea Gibson, Group Leader, Common Ground

Cllr Rodney Berman, Group Leader, Liberal Democrats

Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit

Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations

Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager

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Fy Nghyf / My Ref : CM49269

Dyddiad / Date: 2 March 2023

Councillor Owen Jones
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Owen,

**Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 27 February 2023
Draft Budget Proposals 2023/24**

Thank you for your letter dated 1 March 2023 and the useful comments raised. I can assure you that Cabinet was able to reflect on the points raised prior to our meeting on 2 March 2023.

Some specific comments in respect of the points made in your letter are included below:

Line 253 Fees and Charges – Bulky Waste Collections

I can confirm that the Bulky waste collection increase will be amended at Cabinet. This should have read nil increase and was an administrative error. No savings / income were attached to it in the budget build for 2023/24.

Low-Cost Bereavement Services

Further information is set out below:

Cardiff Council Funeral Service - A fixed price option provided in partnership with a professional funeral director (Penarth Funeral Home). This provides a specified funeral (Burial or Cremation) for a fixed price with no hidden extras. The current fee for a cremation including all funeral director, medical and cremation fees is £1,712 and for burial including the purchase of a new grave is £2,740. Further details are available at [Cardiff Council funeral service - Cardiff Bereavement Services : Cardiff Bereavement Services](#)

The service offers a Direct Funeral Option that is promoted to all funeral directors. A direct funeral is one where the deceased is brought to the crematorium by a funeral director but no service takes place and no family attends. Many organising this type of funeral may arrange to have their own ceremony at an alternative location, for example their own church or club. Our fee for a direct cremation is currently £500 but subject to the fees and charges being approved will drop to £450 from 1st April 2023. The local funeral directors will add to this their own fees which will vary but a direct funeral should be able to be provided completely for under £1,000.

The DWP also provides a Funeral Expenses Payment if the applicant is receiving certain benefits. This can cover the following:

- burial fees for a particular plot
- cremation fees, including the cost of the doctor's certificate
- travel to arrange or go to the funeral
- the cost of moving the body within the UK, if it's being moved more than 50 miles
- death certificates or other documents

You can also get up to £1,000 for any other funeral expenses, such as funeral director's fees, flowers or the coffin. Therefore, effectively if someone on a low income and claiming certain benefits was to utilise the Cardiff Council Funeral Service the DWP are likely to be able to cover all funeral costs. A deposit however is likely to be required to be paid to the funeral director.

As a last resort, under Section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act the Local Authority are legally required to undertake the funeral of a person dying within its area and where no one is willing or able to arrange a funeral. The service area arranges these types of funerals, which are restrictive in terms of demands that can be made on the council (i.e. date/time, service content, officiant). The service area also looks to recover any costs from the deceased's estate.

PTE14 – Sustainable Drainage Price Increase – could this be compulsory?

There would need to be a change to the SAB legislation to make pre-application charges compulsory and this could only be undertaken through a legal process led by the Welsh Government. Under the current legislation, developers are not legally required to undertake a pre-application but it is strongly encouraged by the SAB team that they do so, as it provides them with a better understanding of the requirements for the development and their options with regards sustainable drainage features, site layouts and therefore optimisation of space. Cardiff Council are then able to set the fees for the development based on the size and complexities of the site.

Should Welsh Government be minded to change the legislation and make pre-application compulsory, it is then likely that they would set the fees, as they have done with the formal application process. This would then add risk to the suitability of the fees against actual cost. It must be recognised that the current statutory fees are very low, and Cardiff Council would lose the ability to adjust the fees to meet demand and actual cost recovery.

I hope that this letter captures all the points raised in your letter and thank you again for your support in the budget process this year.

Yn gywir / Yours sincerely



Councillor / Y Cyngorydd Chris Weaver
Aelod Cabinet dros Gyllid, Moderneiddio a Pherfformiad
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance

cc

Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member, Climate Change
Cllr Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member Transport & Strategic Planning
Cllr Joel Williams, Chair of PRAP
Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resources
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance
Neil Hanratty, Director, Economic Development
Andrew Gregory, Director, Planning, Transport & Environment
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