

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 SEPTEMBER 2019

Present: Councillor Patel(Chairperson)
Councillors Boyle, Derbyshire, Owen Jones, Lancaster and Wong

15 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Owen, Parry and Wood

16 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were received:

Councillor Owen Jones	Agenda Item 4	Non-Executive Director of Cardiff Bus
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17 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2019 were approved by the Committee and were signed by the Chairperson.

18 : THIRD CARDIFF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a briefing on the content of the Cabinet report entitled 'Third Cardiff Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report'. Members were asked to note the content of the report and to discuss any further actions relating to the report.

Members were advised that the Cardiff Local Development Plan (LDP) was formally adopted by the Council on 26 January 2016. As part of the statutory development plan process the Council is required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is submitted to the Welsh Government by 31 October each year. This is the third Cardiff AMR to be prepared since the adoption of the LDP covering the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. The AMR provides a short term position statement and a comparison with the baseline data provided in previous AMRs.

The report will help to inform the extent to which the LDP strategy, objectives and policies are being achieved. The findings will help inform the LDP review process as the Council is required to undertake a major review of the LDP in 2020. The main findings of the AMR were set out in the report. These are summarised as follows:

- Employment – monitoring shows strong performance – 20,900 jobs were created between 2006 and 2015. Since the first AMR the number of jobs has been increasing steadily and the latest AMR shows an increase of 6,000 since April 2018.
- Housing – data shows that new homes have started to be completed on many LDP strategic sites. Specifically 511 completions in St Ederyns Village, 167

completions in the north west strategic site; and 51 completions in the north east strategic site

It was reported that the plan-led approach was now successfully delivering new homes. There were 1444 completions in 2018/19, an increase of 43% on 2017/18, and in contrast to the 9 previous years which saw an average of 725 units completed per annum. The data also demonstrated the lag between plan adoption and homes being completed due to a number of legal and logistical factors along with obtaining the necessary planning consents. It was expected that housing completions would increase significantly over the 7 remaining years of the plan.

- Affordable Housing – the plan targets to deliver 6,646 affordable units between 2014 and 2026. The interim target for 2019 is 1,942 units. Data indicates that 1,082 units have been delivered. It was suggested that this was due to the slower than anticipated progress in the delivery of strategic housing allocations. It was also expected that affordable housing completions would increase significantly over the remaining years of the plan.
- Transportation – data collected in relation to sustainable travel demonstrates that sustainable travel trends have continued to increase for work and shopping, but has decreased for leisure and education.
- Gypsy and Traveller Sites – work is progressing to meet the evidenced need for permanent sites and transit Gypsy and Traveller sites, including discussions with the Welsh Government.
- Supplementary Planning Guidance – significant progress has been made in producing a programme of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Since the adoption of the LDP 18 SPGs have been approved by Council.
- Contextual Changes – highlighting changes to the national policy framework which has evolved significantly over the last 3 years.

The AMR concluded that good progress is generally being made in delivering the identified targets and monitoring outcomes. The identified lag in housing delivery now shows strong signs of enhanced completions.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport; James Clemence, Head of Planning and Stuart Williams, Group Leader (Policy) in Planning. After a brief statement from the Cabinet Member, officers were invited to make a statement.

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, raise questions or seek clarification on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked for further details on the 20,900 jobs created between 2006 and 2015. Officers were asked in which geographical areas those jobs have been created and the types of jobs. Officers stated that broad national statistics were referred to. These statistics do not provide such detail but if further

information was needed then officers could liaise with colleagues in the Economic Development Team.

- Members noted that weekly pay has increased by 21% but house prices have increased by 32% over the same period. Members asked if this was financially sustainable and whether such increases would impact on housing building. Officers stated that the LDP provides an evidence-based approach to building. If there was no LDP in place then there was a risk of a faster increases in house prices. The LDP is increasing the supply of sites significantly and enabled 1500 completions in the past 12 months. Officers considered that supply was key to ensuring reasonable prices.
- Members asked for an update on the gypsy and traveller site issue. Members were advised that discussions around the Rover Way site were complex and were continuing.
- The Committee noted that the trend for people partaking in physical activity was decreasing. Officers stated that the data was provided by the Health Board and was high level contextual data from national data sets. It was no possible to identify the exact reason physical activity was decreasing from that data. There was no specific indicator regarding this issue in the LDP.
- Members asked what there was a gap between the target and the delivery of affordable dwellings and what was being done to address this. The Committee was advised that the target in the LDP for affordable homes was set at a level that was realistically deliverable. Now that the progress of completions was accelerating on large strategic sites, along with the Cardiff Partnership Programme, more affordable homes are set to be provided.
- Members asked whether there was any data relating to the provision of social housing the in the rented sector. Officers stated that this information is no captured directly as it is not required for the monitoring report.
- The Committee asked whether the authority is on track to hit its target in terms of the delivery of affordable housing. Officers stated that the authority is currently achieving its percentage targets. The AMR will provide annual indication. It was encouraging that the main strategic sites are starting to show some traction and numbers are likely to increase. However, this was still dependent on a number of external factors.
- Members asked officers to clarify the data set methodology for travel trends was arrived at and how was is monitored. Officers stated that the data comes from the Ask Cardiff Survey. The 2019 survey will be the most comprehensive survey to date. Officers were confident that the survey will provide robust data. Other data sets, such as the National Travel Survey, will be used to cross-check the data.
- Members asked why there has been a significant long term decline in sustainable travel for education. Officers stated that the Ask Cardiff survey is completed by adults as opposed to by pupils. Pupil travel shows an increase in sustainable travel. Further work is required to analyse this issue. The Cabinet

Member stated that the authority is introducing Active Travel Schemes in every school.

- A Member asked whether the investment in cycling infrastructure was having a negative effect on cars or existing bus lanes. Members were advised that traffic modelling was being undertaken to reduce detrimental impact on buses. The network in the city has predominantly been for cars. The authority is trying to create a more balanced split and to use roads more efficiently.
- Officers stated that the Planning Policy Wales policy guidance has been updated, the main changes incorporating the Future Generations and Wellbeing Act. The LDP was already has a placemaking/masterplanning approach in place. The authority will bear Planning Policy Wales in mind in all its management decisions.
- Members asked whether there were any plans to introduce a Biodiversity SPG. Members were advised that it was not possible to introduce new policy. SPGs only provide additional guidance. A policy change would require changes to the LDP.
- Members asked at whether the failure to deliver the required number of houses lead to a review of the LDP and at what point this would happen. Officers indicated that completions over the past 10 years stood at between 500 and 800 per annum. This year there were 1500 completions. Developers are moving forward at all strategic sites, with a number of different outlets on the larger sites. Evidence is strong to expect the rate of completions to accelerate further. Cardiff is currently the fastest growing UK core city.
- The Committee noted that there was no analysis of the types of retail in the AMR. Members considered an analysis of the types of retail being created would better help understand the types of district shopping centres being created. Members were advised that the data presented is for AMR reporting. The authority recognises the value district centres plan in indicators help. The evidence suggest that policies are successful but there are a number of factors beyond the LDP that will impact on the viability of district centres.
- A Member commented that attractiveness was an important consideration but it was not within the scope of the LDP to challenge development in terms of quality of design and therefore attractiveness was not always met.
- Members asked whether the authority was now at a point where it needed to reconsider its policy in relation to student accommodation. Officers referred to a recent application for the temporary change of use of student accommodation. Members were advised that the developer was not seeking a permanent change of use and the development will revert to student accommodation in the next academic year. The application was judged on its merits and it will not set a precedent. Any further application will also be judged on their merits. If an application for permanent change of use is received then a range of other factors will come into play including s106.

- Members welcomed the increase in cycling set out in the report. Members also noted that congestion and emissions were also increasing. The Cabinet Member accepted that air quality was a problem in the city. The authority has set out its plan to improve air quality of the next 18 months.
- Members asked when the central bus station and the Waungron Road hub would be operational. Members also asked for an update on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes set out in the LDP. The Cabinet Member strategy that the timescales for completion of the bus station were provided at the September meeting at the Council. Works at the Waungron Road hub will commence in the New Year and will take approximately 9 months to complete. In terms of BRT, these were aspirational and will be included in the Transport White Paper.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson write on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member conveying their observations.

19 : AFFORDABLE FUNERAL STRATEGY & BURIAL SPACE PROVISION

The Committee received a report providing an overview on the rising costs of funerals and how this can affect residents in Cardiff. Members were asked to consider the Draft Affordable Funerals Strategy that seeks to inform the public about funeral costs and the options they have to procure an affordable and dignified funeral.

Members were advised that funeral costs have risen by 112% over the last 13 years. One in six people now struggle to afford to pay for the funeral of a relative. The average cost of a funeral in the UK is £4,271 and the Welsh average is £3,538. The cost of a basic funeral in Cardiff can vary from under £2,000 to £5,000.

The Social Fund Funeral Payment is available to some people on a low income or who are in receipt of certain benefits. However, this will not cover the whole cost and many applicants are left with debt. The grant process has been criticised for being complicated and taking too long. Many people have committed to making funeral arrangements before it is known if funds will be made available.

In Cardiff Council Funeral Service has been in place for 16 years. The service is provided by a local funeral director at low cost and is available to anyone. The total cost of the service for a cremation is £1,784. It remains 50% lower than the average UK funeral cost.

The objective of the Draft Affordable Funerals Strategy is to create an action plan to ensure that the range of factors affecting people's ability to afford a funeral are addressed, whilst providing advice and guidance to residents on the options available to them.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and the Environment and Martin Birch, OM Bereavement and Registration Services to the meeting. Councillor Michael was invited a statement. Councillor Michael stated that funeral costs were increasing and the authority is taking steps to provide an affordable funeral at a reasonable price to residents.

Bereavement Services recently won a APSE Public Service award and the authority is keen to build on this excellent service.

Martin Birch delivered a brief presentation. The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked whether there would be any provision for woodland funerals at the new site in Thornhill. Members were advised that natural burial would form around 25 % of the total site. All other traditional options would be available also. Land for a pet cemetery has not yet been identified but options were being considered.
- Members asked for further detail in terms of the constituent costs associated with the £4,271 UK average for funeral services. Officers indicated that the Cardiff Funeral Service figure of £1,784 includes the funeral directors fee, doctors fee and a cremation fee. The figure is slightly different for a burial. Flowers and catering are added expenditure and there are concerns that some people are being pressurised into spending more than they can afford.
- The Committee welcomed proposals to provide service users with an opportunity to discuss bereavement. Members considered that this role is a skilled and sensitive one and any staff involved would need a specific skill set. The officer advised that the service wish to work in partnership with 3rd sector organisations who have those skills.
- Referring to the presentation, Members asked what the target fee related to and whether the service area were seeking to increase the fee. The officer stated that this figures demonstrated what the service could potentially charge and still remain within the lower quartile. Members were reminded that the service is entirely resourced from income and there are commitments, budgetary pressures and investments that need to be considered.
- Members supported proposals for a campaign to begin conversations about funerals earlier. Members considered that people often want simple funerals. Officers stated that they could provide advised to families, to run through various options and ensure that families are prepared. These issues are often not discussed. This leads to families feeling guilty and pressurised leading to impacts on the grieving process. A Member stated that these issues are often not discussed in BME communities and it was important that these communities were also included in such conversations.
- Members asked whether an increase in Probate Fees will have an effect. Officers stated that whilst Probate Fees are set to increase it was unknown by how much. This will on come into effect where there is an estate and this is not generally recognised as a funeral poverty issue.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson write on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member conveying their observations.

20 : DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Members discussed options for the Work Programme until the end of December 2019. The draft Work Programme proposals were approved.

21 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

Members discussed a letter written by the 'Managing Biodiversity and Natural Environment in Cardiff' task group. This addressed comments, observations and recommendations that the task group had in relation to the draft 'Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems (BRED) Forward Plan' that was due to be received by Cabinet on 26 September 2019. The Committee endorsed the letter and agreed that it should be sent to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport in advance of the Cabinet meeting on 26 September 2019.

22 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 1 October 2019.

The meeting terminated at 6.55 pm