

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 OCTOBER 2019

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

23 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Wood.

24 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Part III of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interest in general terms and to complete personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial, Members would be asked to leave the meeting and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote.

No declarations of interest were received.

25 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

26 : PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE - QUARTER 3 & OUTTURN PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2018/19

The Chairperson welcomed Councillors M Michael and C Wild to the Committee meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor M Michael to make a statement in which he stated the importance of scrutiny to the Council and welcomed the opportunity attend the meeting and answer any questions the committee may have.

Members received a presentation on Quarter 3 & Outturn Performance Reports 2018/19 which included information on the following matters:

- Performance Indicators – Streetscene
- Performance Indicators - PTE
- Objectives - Corporate Plan Steps – end of year outturn
- Achievements & Good News
- Key Challenges

Following the discussion/presentation the Chairperson asked Members of the Committee if they would like to comment, raise questions or seek further clarification on any of the issues discussed. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Committee identified that the Waste Services had moved to the People and Communities Directorate and queried the rationale for this change. It was explained that the services were looking at a greater synergy with the directorate and the larger projects that were being planned and provide which greater focus on cultural change.
- Members raised the concerns of residents regarding the Wedal Road household waste recycling facility and the identification of a suitable replacement site. The Cabinet Member explained that a number of sites had been considered but all had been unavailable, not for sale or too expensive and would welcome any suggestions for possible sites from local Members. He added that the Council already had two sites which was a similar number as other city Councils. Both Lamby Way and Bessemer Road were running a recycling rate of 65%. He queried the need for an additional site as the recycling rates and the levels of fly-tipping had not increased although he was open to engaging with residents and Members on pop-up site or small sites to increase recycling. Members reiterated the need for a suitable site in the north of Cardiff but the Cabinet Member indicated that the existing sites were within reasonable reach of everyone with a car.
- The Committee remarked that the municipal recycling target appears to have stalled at 59% and wanted to know how a jump to the expected 64% target could be made very quickly (particularly this year). It was explained that Cardiff as a whole recycles well and work was being undertaken with the Welsh Government and our partners to progress the Council's strategy and the decisions that needed to be made. There was a need to use good practice to achieve the target. The Cabinet Member added that there were opportunities to reduce the volume of contamination. A process was needed to identify contaminated bags and inform residents about the contamination, how this should be addressed, and the educational support provided prior to any enforcement taking place. Members welcomed the engagement with Welsh Government and the levels of recycling which was a great achievement. They queried if any initiatives were being planned to make a step change increase in recycling. Officers acknowledged that 30-40% of all material in black bags was recyclable and differing models of recycling would be needed. The Cabinet Member suggested that this would take time and advised that it took up to nine months to get a new recycling vehicle. He continued by re-iterating the need to effectively engage with the residents on the recycling processes which would be beneficial to meeting the requirement. This should be a collaborative approach which would require everyone to engage with any new recycling proposals and processes.
- It was identified in the presentation that Brexit would have an impact the recycling markets, and officers were asked what local measures were being undertaken to address this issue. The officers advised that this responsibility was held by the Welsh Government but discussions were ongoing to see how this could be addressed.
- The committee noted that there was a huge movement for plastic and for waste reduction which if successful would also reduce the volume of recycling. Officers had spoken to Welsh Government and the plastics that were being

discussed formed a small part of the total of recycling. Tetra-packs with their multi layered materials continue to be a larger challenge which would require manufacturers to consider full life use and recycling of packaging.

- Following the completion of the glass recycling pilot Members queried when the full roll-out programme would take place and how long would it take to implement. Officers explained that the pilot had been successful but the Authority was working with Welsh Government to determine how this can best be progressed to a full roll out.
- The Committee questioned the percentage of waste which was sent abroad for processing or dumping. Officers responded that waste, including recycled material, was tracked with a system called Waste Data Flow. The majority of waste was processed within Europe, with only a small amount being disposed elsewhere.
- There was an overspend of £2.5M in Waste Services which had resulted from realistic trade waste targets increased costs of recycling. All services were being looked at to make efficiencies and savings and although the trade waste services could be withdrawn there would be other impacts on staffing and businesses using the service. Discussions were being held with Welsh Government to develop a better understanding to provide ethical recycling for the city.
- The Committee noted that Cabinet Member indicated that street cleanliness had improved and that there was no evidence of an increase in fly tipping. Councillor Boyle stated that in a Freedom of Information request from his group in 2017-18 identified that fly tipping incidents had increased from 1,535 to 3,662 following the closure of Wedal Road. This had contributed to the Council dropping from 13th to 19th on the public accountability measure for street cleanliness. The Cabinet Member explained that £250m had been taken out of the budget and therefore this is now having an impact on services.
- The presentation identified a 50/50 modal split with car usage decreasing from 56% to 46% however these numbers did not correspond with the trend for other transport modes. It was acknowledged that car use had dropped by 10% and that cycle use had only increased by 5% (which was positive). The Committee suggested that further details were needed on how the figures had been developed to ensure that they accurately reflect daily or regular trends of cyclists rather than occasional usage. Officers explained that the figures could be expanded upon to clarify that the cycling rates included all trips and trips to work. Increases in car travel could be related to the number of people moving around the city but this could be expanded upon at a future meeting.
- Members asked what the factors were which had led to the improvements cycling rates. The Cabinet Member explained that car free days, the Nextbike scheme and workplace active travel plans had all helped. Cyclists have also been surveyed regarding highways improvements. Infrastructure investment has been undertaken, bike parking has increased and the promotion by cycling charities has had a positive impact. The Committee was advised that

spending on cycling has increased significantly over the last few years and some of the investments are now providing the benefits that were intended.

- The Committee queried why the roll out of active travel plans had been slow. They were told that these are being rolled out from November with significant involvement with schools with the intention that safer routes from home to schools could be developed. The Chairperson identified that there was an underspend in the school transport budget of £197,000, and asked if this had a negative effect on sustainable travel. He was advised that the budget was used to support individuals to get to school using taxi's or other transport. This matter was being followed up in the new transport white paper being developed and the service was liaising with education to ensure that the cost effective transport services were put in place.
- Members identified that the sustainable transport to schools budget was declining and parents were struggling to determine which child to send to school. Officers advised that partnership working with schools was being developed to ensure that appropriate levels of school transport was provided.
- Given that the numbers of council homes is increasing will our target increase above the current 30% target. Affordable housing was increasing with work being undertaken to develop the viability and holistic approach to engage with partners to meet the ongoing targets but were unlikely to be increased until the target had been achieved.
- The report identified that sickness levels high, negating previous work which had led to a reduction in sickness absence. Officers explained that targeted work had led to some success but efforts were continuing particularly with those employees who were on long term sickness. The officers were working with team and Human Resources to ensure that the policies were followed and that the services were encouraging people to get back into work as soon as possible. The need for strict adherence to the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy, was re-iterated, as was the need for effective workforce planning.

The Chairperson queried the increased sickness levels to 17% and that the completion of 98% of return to work interview did not seem to be making an impact on the levels of sickness absence. The Officers advised that they were following the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy, but the only sickness absence backfills that we used were for waste collections which were needed to ensure that teams were at an appropriate level. It was not known whether there was a direct correlation between the backfilled post and the increase in overspend.

Members suggested that proposals for utilising other Council facilities, for example, the theatre and castle, could be used to incentivise good attendance or to prevent sickness absence. The Committee was advised that this could create difficulties with those who were unable to attend work and would not be in accord with the equality intended by the current policies.

AGREED –That the Chairperson writes on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member for the Environment with the following observations of the Committee:-

- Welsh Government Recycling Targets - Understanding the differences between the results of comparable local authorities might provide Cardiff with some of the answers that it needs to improve its performance.
- High Sickness Rates
 - Return to Work Interviews - sickness rates have continued to rise, suggesting that the policy may not be working effectively in parts of the Council. I would be grateful if you could let me know if there are any plans in place to review the effectiveness of this policy, or to change its format.
 - Overspend Costs - how much of the overspend can be directly attributed to high sickness rates including the 'back filling' of posts due to sickness
 - Increasing Sickness Rates - Reversing this change requires strategic planning and leadership from the Council's Senior Management Team.
 - Sickness: Thinking Outside the Box – that the Council think closely about using the resources that it has to thank staff for the work that they do, and potentially provide rewards for good attendance
- Glass Recycling Pilot - Given that the pilot has been a success the Committee would like to know:
 - Why the scheme has yet to be rolled out across Cardiff;
 - If there are any plans to roll the glass recycling pilot across Cardiff, and if so when is this likely to happen?
- New Household Waste Recycling Centre - the Committee would appreciate a list of potential sites that have been identified, and the reasons why these have been deemed unsuitable. The Committee would also like assurance that the search for a new site will continue and the committee updated on any new developments.

Fly Tipping Data – to provide the Committee with the information that you and officers have assessed to conclude that fly tipping incidents have not increased in Cardiff since the closure of Wedal Road

27 : CARDIFF'S DISTRICT HEAT NETWORK - MEMBER UPDATE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael to the Committee meeting.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Michael to make a statement where he indicated that investigations regarding Heat network systems across the UK and the proposal if it can be delivered would provide a range of opportunities which will benefit the city.

Members received a presentation on Cardiff's District Heat Network which included information on the following matters:

- Heat Network technical requirements
- The planned network
- Feasibility and Design
- Funding
- Potential users of the network
- Plans for the progression of the network
- The purchase and sale of the heat.

Following the discussion/presentation the Chairperson asked Members of the Committee if they would like to comment, raise questions or seek further clarification on any of the issues discussed. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- The Committee requested clarification on the volume of carbon which could be saved by using the network. Officers explained that approximately 70% of carbon could be saved this could be more but for the occasional use of gas boilers to sustain the network when heat was not being produced by Viridor. This would be also improved with an increased number of buildings and facilities being added to the network.
- The committee queried when the network will be operational. It was estimated that 2022 would be when the first customers could be connected. There were significant challenges to get the programme developed but the benefits would be significant for Cardiff and for Wales.
- Members sought clarification of the costs regarding the use of the network. It was explained that the users would pay 5% less than the gas price but that users would be able to access additional tax incentives for the use of the network. It is anticipated that there will be a minimal profit for the Council from the Scheme.
- The Committee were aware that there was a new energy for waste application being consider for a site between Cardiff and Newport. It was explained that the planned Heat network was stand alone and the use of the planned new site was not being considered by the Council.
- The Committee had been advised of the benefits of the network but it was queried if there were any negatives. It was explained that there would be road disruption whilst the network was installed. Other heat sources were also being investigated but were too costly at present, but they could potentially further reduce the need for gas boilers.
- A grant application for the capital funding of £370m required to deliver the system was being developed, The Council had a £4m commitment which was being considered by Legal Services.

AGREED –That the Chairperson writes on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member for the Environment with the following observations of the Committee:-

- Provide them with a summary of the potential financial risks and associated costs for the District heat Network;
- Confirm if there is a point at which the cost of the scheme becomes financially unviable for the Council, along with details of the financial monitoring process
- 'High Sickness Rates' identified in the Quarter 3 & Outturn Performance Reports 2018/19 are also relevant to the Strategic Planning & Transport Portfolio and therefore a joint response would be appreciated

28 : HIGHWAY RESURFACING PROGRAMME - MEMBER BRIEFING NOTE

The Committee received a briefing paper for information.

Agreed: The Committee noted the briefing paper.

29 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MANAGING BIODIVERSITY
& NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN CARDIFF

The Scrutiny Officer provided an update and advised how this matter would be progressed.

Agreed: The Committee noted the update.

30 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were no urgent items.

31 : WAY FORWARD

32 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for Wednesday 20th November 2019 at 4.30pm in City Hall.

33 : CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.35 pm