

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 JUNE 2021

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

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were receive.

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2021 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

4 : COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members were asked to note that Council on 27 May 2021, appointed Councillor Ramesh Patel as Chairman to the Committee and the following as Members of the Committee: Councillors Derbyshire, Jones, Lancaster, Owen, Parry, Parkhill, Sandrey and (1 vacancy).

5 : COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members noted the Committee's Terms of Reference.

6 : COASTAL RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Members were advised that the Cabinet on 17 June 2021 will consider a report entitled 'Coastal Risk Management Programme – Full Business Case and Procurement of Construction Contract'. The Committee was asked to consider report and determine whether to comment, or provide observations or recommendations to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet report provided a briefing on the principle design for the coastal protection scheme and the requirements for the Full Business Case scheduled to be submitted to Welsh Government in November 2021. Cabinet approval was sought for the procurement approach and to commence the construction contract for the coastal defence improvements, which are estimated to cost £23.5M; 85% of which is to be funded by Welsh Government.

A short summary of the key points in the Cabinet Report was set out in the cover report, including the background to the coastal defence scheme and its financing, full business case proposals and the recommended approach to procurement.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment and Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director, Street

Scene to the meeting. Councillor Michael was invited to make a brief statement. Councillor Michael stated the coastal defence scheme has been some time in the making but by March 2022 construction will begin. The Cabinet Member accepted that action was needed on the River Rhymney to protect residences and other properties from the threat posed by the climate emergency and rising sea levels. The scheme was due to be completed by August 2023.

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

- Members were advised that it was of paramount importance that Natural Resources Wales sign off the 'marine licence' to implement the necessary works. Negotiations have commenced with NRW.
- Members noted that the Welsh Government is providing 85% of the funding for the project. The original scheme was estimated to cost circa £11 million. The total cost was now estimated at £23.5 million. Officers were asked to explain the increase. The Assistant Director stated that a number of aspects have changed since the outline business case was considered. Welsh Government increased their requirements for flood defences which meant that the scheme needed to be redesigned to meet those criteria. Ground investigations also indicated that the bedrock was deeper than originally estimated which meant that foundations for the sheet piling element needed to go further underground. A soft-engineering approach on the mudflats also contributed to the increase in costs.
- Members noted that the Council's 15% contribution towards the cost of the scheme would be £3.75 million, yet only £2.6 million has been allocated towards the scheme in the Capital Programme, a shortfall of £1.15 million. Officers were asked to explain how the shortfall would be addressed. Officers advised that the budget shortfall would be identified in the next report.
- Members asked whether the procurement contract would be a fixed-price contract. Members were advised that the contract would be a target-cost project, where the risk is shared by the contractor and the client. A target cost will be submitted for the Welsh Government contribution towards the cost. Welsh Government will also allow a risk allocation to be submitted. The authority is working with risk advisors on a risk profile for the project. The Assistant Director stated that if the authority entered into a fixed-price contract then the entire cost of any risk was likely to fall on the Council. This approach was that adopted for similar schemes throughout England and Wales.
- Officers were asked to comment on the impact of the project on the travelling community site on Rover Way. The Assistant Director stated that the community will remain in-situ during the construction phase. A section of the coastal footpath will be elevated as part of the scheme and the community has requested that a fence be erected to prevent any visual intrusion.
- Members asked whether there will be an impact on the coastal path and whether a temporary alternative route has been considered. Members were advised that discussions are ongoing with the NRW Coastal Path officers in respect of any necessary diversions but the appointed contractor will need to establish how they

aim to deliver the scheme. Members recommended that any diversions be publicised as widely and as early as possible as walkers like to plan their routes ahead.

- Members asked whether there would be any impact on the River Rhymney itself. The Assistant Director stated that embankments will be constructed as part of the scheme to prevent the flow of the river from eroding further into Lamby Way landfill site.
- Officers stated that an area of land would be required as a storage location for the aggregates to be used on the project. There would be an estimated 40 or 50 vehicle movements per day for the duration of the project.
- Members referenced the Committee's previous consideration of this subject in March 2018 and the recommendation that modelling to be carried out to assess the impact of this scheme on the coastline. Members asked whether such modelling has been carried out and the results. The Assistant Director stated that impacts such as coastal shifts would have been undertaken by the JBA (consultants) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The scheme design included rock armour which protects the coastline from erosion. Outside of the scheme there should be no impact. The soft engineering elements of the scheme will help protect the natural environment, such as the mudflats.
- Officers confirmed that the scheme will not impact on the new railway station planned in the east of Cardiff.
- Members asked whether officers were confident that the scheme is sufficient to combat rising sea levels. Members were advised that Welsh Government have set the level of protection needed nationally and the scheme would be designed in accordance with those parameters. This will reduce the risk of flooding but it would not eliminate the potential for flooding during a catastrophic event entirely.
- Members questioned whether similar protection measures will be needed in the future. The Assistant Director stated that the likelihood is that the scheme would provide sufficient protection for a significant period of time. However, the scheme can be enhanced to provide additional protection.
- Officers were confident that the Welsh Government deadline of March 2022 for the funding for the scheme will be achieved. The biggest challenge at present was the granting of a marine licence to undertake the works by NRW. Officers and JBA continue to work closely with NRW to ensure that the deadline is achieved.
- Officers advised that a further Cabinet report on the full business case for the project is expected in November/December 2021.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

7 : NORTH WEST CORRIDOR

The Committee received a draft of a report which was due to be considered by the Cabinet on 17 June 2021 entitled 'North West Cardiff Corridor Transportation Study: Update'. The report would provide the Cabinet with an update on a transportation study that aimed to identify short-term and long-term public transport options through North West Cardiff towards the City Centre. Cabinet would be asked to note the outcome of the current stage of the study and the way forward to progress the short-term and long-term business cases.

The Committee report provided a summary of the key points identified in the draft Cabinet report. Stage 1 of the 'WelTAG' study which identified a shortlist of potential short-term public transport options that could be implemented before 2025 was appended at Appendix B of the Committee's report.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport and Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment. The Cabinet Member was invited to make a brief statement.

Councillor Wild welcomed the report. The north-west corridor was vitally important for the city and neighbouring authorities and it was acknowledged that transportation in this area has been an area of concern for some time. Cardiff Council, RCT Council and the Welsh Government have undertaken the Stage 1 study which has resulted in some early recommendations for improving public transport, including increasing the frequency of train services, a new metro station at Ely Mill, options for Waungron Road interchange and a range of other measures.

The Chairperson opened the debate on this item and invited questions and comments from members of the Committee. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked for further detail on the progress of the Active Travel programme. The Cabinet Member stated that Transport for Wales have spoken in great detail around how metro station will link to active travel and bus routes. This report will push Transport for Wales to bring forward the work they have planned. In terms of the main active travel routes, the Council's priority is the completion of Cycleway 4 from Castle Street through Sophia Gardens to Llandaff and Plasdwr.
- Members asked for clarification on the use of light rail and rapid bus transit. The Director stated that the report highlights some 'quick wins' that can be implemented over the next five years – such as the upgrading of stations on the City Line, increasing the frequency of services and connecting bus routes to those station hubs from existing and emerging residential areas. The first priority is to deliver those upgrades. Evaluation of the opportunities brought by light rail and heavy rail will be undertaken at a later stage between 2025 and 2030.
- Members asked, that if the intention was to use light rail in the longer term, how an interchange between light rail and heavy rail at any proposed new stations would work. The Director stated that the City Line is heavy rail and there are discussion taking place with Transport for Wales regarding the mode to be used on the wider network and the types of vehicles to be used. Those issues have not yet been resolved. The City Line has been identified as part of the cross rail and

provide a link to Cardiff Bay and beyond to Newport Road. That will form part of the discussion in terms of the routing and types of vehicles to be used.

- Officers advised that the WelTag report has been jointly led with Welsh Government and there has been interaction with Transport for Wales regarding rail. The next phase will be the identification of preferred routes and there will be more opportunity to engage with bus service and other public transport providers at that stage.
- Members asked whether other parts of the city feel neglected in terms of public transport. Officers stated that the aim is to provide a public transport network for the whole of the City. Proposals for North West Cardiff are part of a wide conversations around crossrail and the circle line. There are proposals for all parts of the City and the challenge is to understand what the mode to deliver a mass transit system in those areas.
- Officers were asked whether the report taken account of the changes to travel habits following the pandemic. Members were advised that Welsh Government has restructure the rail franchise as it became clear that patronage would fall significantly. At this stage there are too many uncertainties to know the full impact but the estimation of demand will form a critical part of the next stage.
- Members asked officers to explain why Bus Rapid Transit routes were not in place. The Committee was advised that the Section 106 triggers are required to release the funding for the new bus routes. Some bus lanes have been provided where there is limited funding available. Welsh Government has established a working group to look at how the network can be reformed and redesigned. Express bus services are part of that.
- Members noted the shift toward tram/train highlighted in the report. Officers were asked whether this shift has happened recently and whether the has been any impact on the Council transport plans. Members were advised that the Welsh Government is procuring vehicles that can be used on heavy rail or as tram trains. The Council is keen to get its network aligned with a tram-like system as this will provide more inter-relationship with the network in the city; stations can be closer together; better interactions with public spaces, etc.
- Officers were asked to explain how integrated transport would work. Members were advised that, unlike active travel, the authority only controls limited elements of bus and train services. Welsh Government is bringing more integration into the system based on the metro. The authority is trying to support that with its Bus Strategy. The strategy aims to identify the key routes and upgrade those to gold standard. Members asked what steps the authority could take to speed up integration. Members were advised that the biggest impact would be integrated ticketing and the Welsh Government is looking at that. The Council has a mechanism to establish quality partnerships to set standards on routes but that requires revenue support. Part of the next stage work will look at how funding is managed to make the network more efficient, towards network redesign as there is now considerable public funding supporting bus services. The Cabinet Member stated that the authority has invested heavily in active travel schemes such as a

high quality bike hire scheme.

- Members agreed that consideration should be given to post-covid travel patterns and to how these are likely integrate into travel planning provisions. Members asked how this would form part of WelTag 2. The Director stated that there is a high degree of uncertainty around this issue. Officers are modelling data to inform decisions moving forward.
- Member noted the constraints set out in the report such as the population growth estimate at paragraph 2.9.1 of approximately 348,000 up to 430,000 in 2036. The Council's own population growth figure has revised that down significantly. Members asked what the implications were for public transport and whether neighbouring authorities had revised their population growth figures also. The Director stated that the metro tram/train scheme is a long term scheme spanning generations and therefore it would be a mistake to look at population projections for the next 5 to 10 years.
- The Committee also noted that constrains on bus rapid transit schemes set out in paragraph 2.11.1 of the report, such as 'pinch points' in Llandaff, Fairwater and Canton. Members asked whether rapid transit corridors are achievable if there isn't the physical space to expand the road network. The Director agree that the transport network was not designed with segregated cycling or bus networks. The authority is seeking to rebalance modes across the City. A pragmatic position will need to be taken at pinch points in key locations. Weltag 2 will look at options for strategic locations that bypass those congestion points, for example accessing the A4232 for express bus services linking with park and ride at Junction 33.
- Members welcomed the proposals but considered that the public were frustrated that these plans were not being implemented quickly. Members asked how many of the short-term improvements might be implemented before 2025. Referring to point 19 and connectivity to RCT, Members considered that the authority has an obligation to those living outside the city who are seeking employment to travel into the city easily. Members sought assurance that planned improvements will be implemented quickly. The Director stated that projects of this scale move slowly but the authority is moving as quickly as possible. Members considered that the key issue was to have target dates to the projects being implemented moving forward.
- Members asked whether the Coryton Line would be more than a single line in order to increase the frequency of services. Officers advised that the Coryton Line would form part of the Circle Line and conversations were ongoing with Welsh Government regarding that. In the shorter term the intention is to increase the frequency of services on the line from two trains per hour to four trains per hour. That will required more passing points or the doubling of the track and this upgrade would be a priority. There would also be an opportunity to put a new line in from the new Velindre Station to the Coryton Line.
- Members sought clarification on whether it is intended to provide a rapid bus system in the short term, which will ultimately be replaced by tram/train in the longer term. Officers stated that the bus network would work in parallel with the

tram/train network.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

8 : CITY CENTRE NEXT STEPS - CASTLE STREET AND CITY CENTRE EAST

Members received a draft Cabinet report regarding the next steps in the Castle Street and Centre East transport schemes. Cabinet was due to consider the report at its meeting on 17 June 2021.

Members were advised that the draft report provided feedback from the public consultation exercise and modelling work undertaken on Castle Street scheme. The report will seek Cabinet approval for modifications to the current road layout to achieve clean air compliance and for approval to commission further modelling and analysis of the impacts of these modifications on clean air, congestion and wider city recovery and renewal. Furthermore, the report also seeks approval for delegated authority to award the tender and begin construction of the City Centre East Phase 1 + Canal Project.

In June 2019 the Council approved a Clean Air Plan to achieve NO₂ emissions compliance, following the 2018 legal direction issued by the Welsh Government requiring the Council to comply with EU emissions limits. The Clean Air Plan contained a scheme for Castle Street, which allowed traffic with restricted capacity. The Clean Air Plan also contained the City Centre East scheme covering Dumfries Place, Station Terrace, Churchill Way, including the Canal reopening, and Bute Terrace and which aimed to achieve high quality, active travel infrastructure; connecting key developments in a sustainable way.

The Covid-19 pandemic cause both schemes to be paused. Castle Street was subsequently closed to all traffic and Station Terrace was restricted to bus, taxi and limited access only. In Autumn 2020 Castle Street was reopened to buses, taxis and access vehicles and Station Terrace reopened to all traffic.

A public consultation exercise took place between March and May 2021 seeking views on the following options for Castle Street:

- Option 1: This scheme is the previously approved design included in the Council's Clean Air Plan. The scheme allows general traffic to access the area under reduced capacity, whilst also providing segregated cycling facilities, bus priority and public realm improvements.
- Option 2: A variation on Option 1 where general traffic is restricted from using the street as a through-route at all times. The scheme provides a segregated cycle lane, bus and taxi access and improved public realm via an extension to the pavement on the south side.

The Cabinet report summarised the results of the public consultation. A total of 6,250+ responses were received - 53.8% thinking Option 1 had some considerable

benefit and 33.8% thinking Option 2 had some considerable benefit. The full report on the consultation exercise was appended to the report.

Members were advised that traffic modelling indicated:

- Both Castle Street options cause some displacement to the west of the city centre
- There are larger impacts on A48 and A4232 due to rerouting to avoid the city centre

Air quality modelling shows:

- Both Castle Street options ensure compliance re NO₂, with Option 2 reducing levels the furthest
- Both options show improvements in air quality across the city
- Both options show small increases re NO₂, compared to the baseline scenario but not to a level that exceeds legal limits.

With regards to the City Centre East Scheme, Members were asked to note that delegated authority was sought for the Director of Planning, Transport and Environment in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources to award the tender and begin construction, anticipated to begin in September 2021. The following measures would be taken to inform and assist stakeholders and the general public about Castle Street and City Centre East schemes:

- A dedicated project website containing all information associated with the project including: project background; maps; designs and operational plans.
- A communication plan for each phase of works, including: newsletters for local residents and businesses; press releases and proactive media engagement.
- Regular Stakeholder Meetings with Bus Operators and other key stakeholders

The Cabinet report also provided details of the funding options for both schemes and the need for Cabinet to consider the future maintenance costs as part of its Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member – Strategic Planning & Transport; Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment and Gethin Shields, Transportation Programme Manager to the meeting. After brief statements the Chairperson opened the debate on this item. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members raised concerns that reopening Castle Street would increase congestion and increase NO₂ emissions as a result. Officers stated that the Castle Street scheme not only reduced traffic to a single lane, but it also included an additional crossing for cyclists that would in effect filter the amount of traffic entering Castle Street. Traffic flows are managed along the whole corridor to Castle Street and the City Centre to prevent queueing. Members were also asked to note that there

has been significant behavioural change as a result of Castle Street being opened to buses and taxis only. Modelling has indicated that there isn't significant detrimental impact on either option.

- Members asked officers to clarify whether there would be an increase in congestion in some areas leading to Castle Street. The Director stated that there were a number of variables impacting upon the network. Therefore, a revision of the existing scheme and more modelling of the impacts would feed into the options considered for a permanent scheme moving forward.
- Members asked whether in the long term officers considered that the clean air problems in Castle Street would be resolved by the progression of the South Wales Metro project. Officers stated that Metro proposals would be phased in from 2023 and some improvement would be expected.
- Members noted that the preferred option would be to allow traffic to return to Castle Street on a temporary basis and that would allow for more data to be gathered. Members questioned why the option for no access to private vehicles whilst evidence was gathered was not considered as an option.
- Members asked how the opening of Castle Street to traffic balanced against the proven issue of induced demand. Officers accepted that is a difficult choice but the traffic network is being designed for buses, taxis and private vehicles and there was a balance to be struck between those modes. Trying to understand the implications of the post-Covid recovery period on the City Centre is a critical issue for the Council and the authority did not wish to limit the economic viability of the city centre. The original preferred option was to allow general traffic to access the area under reduced capacity. The pandemic offered an opportunity to close Castle Street and to open it up to buses and taxis. Modelling on each option would allow greater understanding in terms of a permanent decision.
- Members noted that no street in residential areas is showing an increase in NO₂ levels whilst Castle Street was closed. Officers were asked to confirm that the data indicated that. Officers accepted that Castle Street was non-compliant prior to the pandemic. Other areas whilst compliant were not as good as they could be. Modelling indicated that there was no increase above 30mgs NO₂ under either option being considered. However, the authority was not at the right point to move forward with a permanent decision as great deal of uncertainty remained across the areas set out in the report. Option 1 has not yet been tried out and its modelling and analysis would help inform a complex strategic decision.
- Members asked whether Castle Street will potentially form part of a low emissions zone in the future. Officers stated that the possibility has been considered but the authority would need to be mindful of any distributional impacts of such a scheme i.e. the impact on those sections of the community who were unable to afford electric or low-emission vehicles. Those considerations would need to be part of any future assessment on such a scheme.
- Officers were asked whether the possibility of allowing access to blue badge holders to use Castle Street were considered. Officers advised that a blue badge

only option has not been assessed.

- Officers confirmed that the plan was to provide two way access for all vehicle, including buses. However, there would only be a segregated route for buses west-bound.
- Officers confirmed that there were no plans to request bus companies to use electric vehicles only in Castle Street. Electric buses are likely to be used on routes using Castle Street, Westgate Street and North Road but this is not currently enforceable. The Castle Street scheme and the impact of the introduction of electric buses and taxis will be monitored and analysed. If the result is further non-compliance then further decisions may be needed at a later date.
- The Cabinet Member stated that under the legal direction and the Welsh Government's clean air policies, the authority would not be permitted to introduce a charging regime if compliance could be achieved by other means. The Welsh Government is currently looking to change their policies to allow a clean air policy and a congestion charging policy.
- Members were previously assured air quality issues would not be pushed in to other parts of the City. The Committee sought assurance on whether the closure of Castle Street has worsened air quality levels in other parts of the City. Members were advised that monitoring data is based on annual averages and the results have been skewed somewhat due to the national Covid-19 lockdown. Since opening Castle Street to buses and taxis there have been no breaches in terms of air quality in other parts of the City.
- Members asked whether the phasing of traffic lights will push air quality issues into other areas, such as Boulevard de Nantes. Officers indicated that monitoring has indicated air quality isn't worsening.
- Members asked whether the modelling, referred to in the media, that indicated air quality on the A48 and A4232 would worsen in the future was current. Officer confirmed that that the modelling did show a slight increase but these did not exceed air quality standards.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

9 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members received a report seeking the Committee's approval for the first combined Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21, prior to consideration by Full Council on 24 June 2021.

Members were also asked to note the proposed schedule of Environmental Scrutiny Committee meeting dates for September 2021 – March 2022.

RESOLVED – That the Committee approves Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21.

10 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items.

11 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 6 JULY 2021

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 6 July 2021.

12 : CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting terminated at 6.51 pm