

POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 SEPTEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor Walker(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Berman, Cowan, Henshaw, Lister, Mackie
and Williams

21 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Joel Williams advised that he would be late joining the meeting

22 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

23 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

24 : CARDIFF REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member, Strategic Planning & Transport; Simon Gilbert, Head of Planning and Stuart Williams, OM, Strategic-Placemaking to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised that from the papers Members will know that the process of developing a Replacement Local Development Plan is long and will take until October 2024 to be adopted. There are several key consultation stages along the way, particularly between now and submission of the plan in March 2024. Scrutiny is an important part of those consultations, and therefore scrutiny chairs have been in discussion as to the best approach to ensure the benefit of all scrutiny committees' knowledge and expertise is accessed. It is possible there will be a collaborative approach going forward but we are individually taking the opportunity of familiarising ourselves with the challenges ahead to ensure Cardiff gets it right. We will then be sending a combined letter to the Cabinet before they discuss the vision issues and objectives.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a short statement and Officers provided Members with a presentation, after which Members were invited to ask questions and make comments and observations;

Members discussed population projections, the impact of Covid and Brexit and also the importance of ensuring that vulnerable groups and people on the housing waiting list are included in considerations. Officers explained it was difficult to know if sites would be adequate, but they will look at the data to inform the Autumn consultation and the preferred strategy.

A discussion took place around consultation and the constraints of having predominantly online consultation due to the pandemic. It as noted that digital consultation can exclude certain groups of people. Members considered it was

important to increase public awareness of consultation and that drop-in sessions and workshops could be planned going forward. Members suggested a letter drop but Officers explained that would be a logistical challenge. Members further suggested increasing engagement with young people through consultation on social media and workplace-based events. These suggestions were welcomed by Officers.

Members suggested that hard copies of the LDP be placed in Hubs and Libraries.

In relation to candidate sites, Members asked that local members receive confidential briefings. Officers stated that the list of potential candidate sites was due to be launched at the end of November but they were happy to brief local members before the list is published. Members were pleased that the Cabinet Member acknowledged the value of scrutiny in this area.

Members were pleased to note that placemaking was central to the plan and that the plan would be produced based on population needs.

Members sought assurance around zero carbon and that the issue of embodied carbon in existing buildings would be addressed. Officers explained that this was being looked at alongside monitoring travel habits to inform the move to a Carbon Neutral City in line with One Planet Cardiff.

Members discussed the planned increase in Tree Canopy and were advised that there would be a collaborative approach taken with landowners and Coed Caerdydd when deciding on sites.

Members were assured that house design was integral to the plan and Officers work with developers on house design, community design and place making.

Members referred to the maintenance of historical buildings and were assured that this was included in the plan.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Members on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

25 : BUDGET MONITORING - MONTH 4 REPORT 2021/22

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation & Performance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director, Resource; Ian Allwood, Head of Finance and Anil Hirani, Operational Manager, Capital, Corporate & Treasury to the meeting.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee has responsibility for scrutiny of the Council's financial planning, policy and control. That means monitoring the whole Council's financial position throughout the budget year. Committee are therefore scrutinising the position at month 4 in the budget year 2021/22, which will be reported to Cabinet on Thursday.

The Chairperson reminded Members that at this point in the year and from this monitoring report Members should become aware of services that are challenged in managing their budgets. This should inform discussion later on work programming for

the year. Committee are also obliged to look more closely at services that sit directly within its own Terms of Reference.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a short statement and Officers provided Members with a presentation, after which Members were invited to ask questions and make comments and observations;

Members discussed the overall position and asked what guidance and support was being provided to service areas with large overspends in order that they can improve their budgetary position. Officers assured Members that they engage regularly with service areas in relation to this.

Members were concerned about the sustainability of using the contingency fund. Officers advised that in Month 9, they would have a better understanding of the hardship fund and therefore a clearer understanding of the overall financial position which would inform their next steps in relation to the contingency fund.

With regards to Capital Receipts, Members were advised that these are over a 5-year period but due to the pandemic there have been some delays to the scheme. Officers remained hopeful that they could still maximise receipts and explained that the Annual Property Plan would come before Committee and provide an opportunity for further scrutiny.

Members referred to the impact of Brexit on the financial position such as increasing inflation and the shortage of HGV Drivers and asked about the cost of these impacts. Officers advised that this was central to the work being undertaken with regards to reviews and panning going forward. Officers acknowledged that there could be risks to both Revenue and Capital and medium-term financial planning was key in managing these impacts going forward.

Members made reference to the deficits in the Economic Development service area and asked if these were recoverable. Officers explained that at present they are assumptions and Month 9 would show a clearer position, but they were hopeful that some deficits would be recoverable.

Members were also concerned about the overspend in Legal and Governance Services. Officers explained that additional funding had been provided to the directorate but that there was also a need to review a number of factors in order to reduce the need for a budget realignment.

Members stressed the importance of managing the variance in the Capital Programme going forward as this was higher than previous years due to the impacts of the pandemic such as higher inflation.

RESOLVED: The Committee AGREED that the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Members on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments and observations.

26 : WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Chairperson reminded Members that over the summer a list of possible items for the work programme between now and March 2022 had been circulated and views

were sought on the Chairpersons initial prioritisation. The recognised traffic light approach was used, so red items would definitely be programmed, amber items would aim to be scrutinised, and green will only be scrutinised if several red and amber items slip.

The list of topics was grouped thematically as Strategic Overview, Financial, Performance, Recovery, Property, Participation & Engagement and Partnership Scrutiny.

Appendix 2 to the report shows how the work will pan out if priorities remain the same. Timings allocated are informed by senior officer discussions but are subject to change as we remain flexible to scrutiny at the most effective point.

The Chairperson explained that Committee has an established Performance Panel with a growing remit to monitor performance, particularly at the mid and end points of the year. In 2021 the Panel also sat to allow greater scrutiny collaboration on the targets set within the Corporate Plan 2021-24.

Members agreed to the approaches put forward and were invited to express any interest in joining the Performance Panel.

27 : URGENT ITEM (IF ANY)

None.

28 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11th October 2021.

The meeting terminated at 6.20 pm