

Ref: RDB/RP/CW/02.10.2018

05 November 2018

Councillor Caro Wild,
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Wild,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 2 October 2018

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 2 October 2018. As you are aware the meeting received items titled 'Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate – Budget Briefing' and 'Cardiff Cycling Programme Update'. The comments and observations made by Members on the areas relevant to your portfolio of responsibility are set out in this letter.

Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate – Budget Briefing

Overall Directorate Budget Summary - At the start of the meeting the Director for Planning, Transport & Environment provided the Committee with a summary of the Directorate budget position. He explained that the Directorate is projected to be £1.424 million overspent by the end of the 2018/19 financial year and that £821,000 of the £1.838 million savings identified would probably not be achieved in year. He also explained that the level of savings for 2019/20 would increase to £6.5 million – a significant increase. He continued by highlighting the overspends and a range of other operational challenges facing the Directorate:

- **Recycling & Waste Management Services** – The service was projected to be overspent by £1.064 million at the end of the 2018/19 financial year; a large proportion of the in year savings identified for the service were unlikely to be achieved; FTE sickness rates in the service were running at

approximately 20 days per member of staff; there was an ongoing fraud investigation within the service that was having a financial impact on the in year budget position; an ongoing HMRC investigation was being conducted into a potentially underpaid landfill tax bill which was creating an unanticipated in year financial pressure; a range of managerial and operational processes needed to be improved to ensure that there was better control over volumes of materials being received and processed; that the Council had received a £2,000 fine for the late submission of data for the Welsh Government recycling target; that significant Council resources were being directed into a service area review that focused on six or seven key work streams – once the reviews were completed the information would be used to create a plan to drive improvement across the service.

- **Fleet Services** - The service is projected to be overspent by £322,000 at the end of the 2018/19 financial year and that this was largely down to unachieved vehicle utilisation savings; that data management needed to improve and that the introduction of the Civica Tranman fleet management software would help address this challenge; an experienced new manager had been recruited and that he would move into post in October; the service was currently undergoing a review that they hoped would drive future improvements.
- **Other Services** - The Director for Planning, Transport & Environment also commented on significant overspends from Planning & Building Control (£354,000) and in 'Cross Directorate Savings' (£222,000). Two end of year budget underspends were identified for Highways (£489,000) and Schools Transport (£100,000).

Future Actions - Given the content of the Directorate budget summary the Committee is deeply concerned at the current financial position. The prospect of delivering £6.5 million of savings for 2019/20 seems to be an almost impossible task given that they will probably fall well short of the £1.838 million of savings required for the current financial year. The Committee has decided to keep a close eye on the budget position and associated service delivery improvements that urgently need to take place during the rest of this

financial year and, therefore, would be grateful if you could arrange the following:

- **Sickness Rates** - High sickness rates have been a longstanding problem in a number of services currently provided by the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate. For a short time it seemed that sickness rates in areas like Recycling & Waste Management and Neighbourhood Services were reducing, however, in the last few years it has once again started to increase. During the meeting the Committee was told that sickness is being managed in accordance with the existing Council sickness absence policy and that the delivery of a sickness absence action plan was a Corporate issue. The Committee understands that this is being dealt with as a Corporate issue, however, the lack of progress suggests that a different approach needs to be taken. I would be grateful if you could take this comment on board and provide the Committee with details of specific actions that will be taken in the areas of the Directorate with persistently high sickness rates.

- **Clawback Savings Shortfall** - As referenced earlier in this letter, it was made clear to the Committee that it was unlikely that £821,000 of the £1.838 million of savings for 2018/19 would be achieved within the current financial year. As you will appreciate balancing the Directorate budget and meeting the agreed savings targets is vitally important, therefore, I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with a plan of how the Directorate might claw back the savings shortfall during the remainder of the 2018/19 financial year.

- **Digitalisation** - The Director for Planning, Transport & Environment explained that future savings proposals would focus on a number of key themes; one of these was Digitalisation. I would be grateful if you could arrange for the newly appointed Chief Digital Officer to provide a paving report setting out the planned digitalisation proposals for the Directorate, the timescales in which they will be delivered and the savings that they will generate.

- **Parking Revenue Account Funded Schemes & Projects** – During the budget briefing item the scope of projects that could be funded by the Parking Revenue Account was discussed. I would be grateful if you could provide a summary of the schemes and projects currently being funded from the Parking Revenue Account.
- **Brexit** - Towards the end of the item a Member asked if the Directorate had undertaken any planning around how to deal with potential negative impacts arising from Brexit. The Director for Planning, Transport & Environment explained that the short-term priority was to focus on rebuilding the foundations of key services in advance of the proposed savings for 2019/20 and beyond. He also felt that it was not practical to plan for such an event as it was almost impossible to predict the eventual outcome of such a complicated process. During the way forward the Committee agreed that the Directorate should at least attempt to identify the associated key risks and determine a series of mitigating actions to address any problems that might be caused by Brexit.

Cardiff Cycling Programme Update

- During the item a Member expressed concern and frustration at the lack of cycling infrastructure that had been built into the newly completed section of the Eastern Bay Link Road. He felt that all newly built roads should as default include cycling infrastructure – missing out on such opportunities was a mistake in both financial and sustainable travel terms. He expanded on the point by saying that it was particularly disappointing since he had been involved in conversations several years ago about building cycling provision into the new section of the Eastern Bay Link Road. The Director for Planning, Transport & Environment explained that schemes like the Eastern Bay Link Road take years to plan and build. At the time when the initial designs were created cycling would not have been a priority in the way that it is today. During the way forward Members agreed that failing to include cycling infrastructure in the new section of the Eastern Bay Link had been a missed opportunity and that in future the Council should look to include cycling infrastructure in all new roads built in the city.

- The cover report stated that the proportion of Cardiff residents travelling to work by bike was 16.5% - this represents a very positive improvement and is clear evidence that cycling is growing in popularity. A Member asked where the increase in new cyclists was coming from and wanted to know what the net impact on overall modal shift was, for example, were the new cyclists former walkers or bus users. I would be grateful if you could ask someone from the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate to look into the matter and provide feedback to the Committee.

- A Member asked how much per annum the Council spends per head of the population on cycling and was told that the current figure was £4 per head. This seemed very low compared to the top performing European cities, some of who spend over £30 per head. An officer from the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate explained that cycling groups were currently lobbying Welsh Government for an increase to £20 per head. The Committee would support this and encourage the Council to support this group by lobbying Welsh Government for additional funds for cycling; particularly as this would help achieve challenging modal shift and air quality targets.

- During the meeting it was noted that there was no specific budget for the maintenance of cycle routes. Instead monies were drawn from the Highways Maintenance budget as and when required. Given the projected increase of cycling and its associated infrastructure the Committee feel that it would be sensible to allocate a specific budget for cycling infrastructure maintenance. I would be grateful if you could look into the option of doing this and then provide feedback to the Committee.

- The Committee believe that the growth of cycling can only be supported by the Council's ongoing roll out of 20 mph schemes across the city. It would be appreciated if you could provide the Committee with an update on the 20mph schemes currently being delivered and other future schemes that are in the pipeline.

- Members were concerned by the lack of consistency across the city around cycle lane and sign markings. They felt that this lack of consistency was confusing for cyclists, motorists and pedestrians, therefore, they would ask you to look into developing a single cycling sign and lane marking standard across Cardiff.
- It was noted during the meeting that significant improvements could be made to Cardiff's cycling infrastructure if a series of missing links were addressed. Could you please provide the Committee with a list of Cardiff's key missing cycling links and a summary of what can be done to fill these gaps.

There are sections of this letter that are common to the Committee letters written for both the Strategic Planning & Transport and Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment portfolios. Where this is the case the Committee is happy to receive a joint reply.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the content of this letter.

Regards,

The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read 'Ramesh Patel'. It is positioned to the left of the printed name and title.

Councillor Ramesh Patel
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Andrew Gregory - Director of City Operations
- Matt Wakelam - Operational Manager, Infrastructure & Operations
- Paul Carter – Head of Transport
- Matthew Price - Section Leader, Transport Vision, Policy & Strategy

- James Clemence – Head of Planning
- Davina Fiore - Director of Governance & Legal Services
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee