

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 DECEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor Patel(Chairperson)
Councillors Derbyshire, Philippa Hill-John, Owen Jones,
Lancaster, Jackie Parry, Owen, Wong and Wood

50 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

51 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

52 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

53 : PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE - QUARTER 1 & 2 PERFORMANCE REPORTS 2018/19

The Committee received the Planning, Transport and Environment Directorate – Quarter 1 and 2 Performance Reports 2018/19. Members were asked to consider the information received and determine whether they wished to make any comments, observations or recommendations to the Cabinet.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment and Andrew Gregory, Director Planning, Transport and Environment. The Director was invited to deliver a presentation. Members were then asked to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked what lessons were learned from the Greener Grangetown scheme. The Cabinet Member stated that the scheme has been a success and is performing as it was intended to do. It was the first scheme of its type and there were lessons learned. A commitment was given that the authority will look to repeat the scheme in other parts of the city. The Director stated more discussions needed to be held at a local level during the early stages, so that those discussions can feed into contract negotiations. There were also discussions to be had with the Welsh Water/Dwr Cymru and National Resources Wales around introducing balance between partner organisations in terms of risk.
- Members noted a rise in the level of sickness between Q1 and Q2 2018/19. Sickness has increased by 2.83 FTE days per person across the whole Directorate. Members asked has there been such a big increase between Qtr 1 and Qtr 2 and what whether there was a way to address this. The Director stated that the Management Team were

holding regular meetings internally to understand how best to tackle long term sickness. Management is tight and procedures a rigorously applied, but managers are trying to dig deeper. Members stated that sickness absence levels are high in the service area, but they were being reduced. Now sickness absence is increasing and Members asked officers to explain what was failing. The Director stated that the improvements in recent years came about as a result of more rigorous application of the sickness absence policy. This year as a result of a restructure and a criminal investigation, middle managers are being taken out of their day to day duties, and this is putting additional strain on the service.

- Members asked what initiatives were in place to ensure that the authority is able to reach the Welsh Government's 64% recycling target. The Cabinet Members advised that 3000 new wheeled bins are being provided to residents and a review of green waste collections is being conducted. Service users at HWRCs are being asked to recycle the items that they are currently disposing of in black bags. The Cabinet Member was confident of reaching the target. A range of actions have been identified, in particular promoting waste education. For example, an educational video is also being worked on with children in school 'Eco-clubs'. The Cabinet Member stated that recycling in Cardiff was a good news story.
- Members noted that, whilst the figures were not validated, there was drop in the amount of waste recycled between Q1 and Q2. The Cabinet Member stated that Q3 will include the Christmas holiday where waste collections and recycling are traditionally higher. It was also suggested that the hot weather during the year resulted in less grass cuttings being collected during the quarter. The average was 63% so the rate is moving in the right direction. The next challenge was to increase the quality of recycling collected, perhaps by separating plastics and paper. This will also help reduce the amount of contamination in the waste stream.
- The Director stated that there are triggers in the Action plan that include percentage targets for recycling which, if achieved, will lift the overall recycling rate to 64% next year. There are two key elements essential to achieving this – public support and having the most advantageous kerbside collection model in place. The Cabinet Member stated that in order to achieve 70% recycling by 2020 the service area have identified where those tonnages will come from.
- Members noted that the target for clearing reported fly-tipping was 5 working days. Members sought clarification as to how performance was calculated and verified, and in particular, when fly-tipping is reported and not cleared then subsequently reported again. The Cabinet Member stated that the intention is to clear fly-tipping as soon as possible, but there will be occasions when this is not achievable, for instance, if the waste contains asbestos or other potentially hazardous materials.

- Members asked whether it would be more cost effective to train our own staff to remove asbestos safely rather than to outsource those jobs to external contractors. The Cabinet Member gave a commitment to investigate this matter further.
- Members asked if the Scrutiny function was able to help the service area with the challenge of low productivity. The Director stated that some areas within the directorate need more accountability. There was often a deficiency in management or no proper systems in place. More meta data is required to get an understanding.
- The Committee noted that the Director was exceeding its target for the percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed time periods of 25%. Members asked whether this was to the detriment of the city. The Director stated that it was not the case that more applications are detrimental to the city. The quality of applications has improved overall and placemaking/design is now central to all applications.
- A Member raised concerns regarding the number of people tarmacking their drives, which could lead to surface water flooding in some areas. Members were advised that Planning officers recommend a permeable layer.
- Members welcomed the positive feedback from the glass collection pilot. The Cabinet Member stated that the collection method was safer for staff and was producing better quality recycling. The authority was now able to sell the glass rather than pay for it to be reprocessed. A Member stated that the feedback received from residents indicated that it was difficult to order additional caddies. The Cabinet Member stated that the trial aimed to learn lessons and all feedback will be evaluated and taken into account with the intention of ironing out these glitches.
- A Member considered that the public did not know what to do with their additional waste generated during the Christmas period. The Cabinet Member stated that information is provided on the Council's website regarding what can and cannot be recycled.
- Members asked whether there was any comparative data between the productivity of permanent staff and the productivity of agency staff and also, whether there were any intentions to make long term agency staff permanent. The Director stated that the picture was complex. Permanent staff and agency staff sometimes had differing motivations. However, as part of the reshaping of the service the balance between permanent and agency staff was being looked at. The Director felt that whilst it was good to have a large number of permanent staff, there would probably always be a need for a pool of agency staff to deal with fluctuating service demand. All staff want to be supported and the long term needs of the service and its staff need to be considered.
- The Committee noted that in October 2018 projected savings for the

Directorate stood at £6.5 million. However, the figure has been reduced to £4.269 million. Members asked officers to explain the difference. The Director stated that in broad terms, given the changes in the Street Scene Department it was considered no longer appropriate to ask the service to carry an additional burden of a 17% savings target.

- Members requested further understanding of the sustainability of the Next Bike scheme – is there an expectation that the scheme will be self-funded or is it reliant on grant funding. The Director stated that the scheme is self-funded. The Welsh Government has provided capital grant funding which was used to provide the infrastructure to establish the scheme. The scheme has been successful in the city and further improvements in the network will provide safer routes and it anticipated that cycling will increase further, and further resilience in terms of the schemes commerciality. The Director stated that the key different between the Next Bike scheme and an earlier cycling scheme was the comprehensive network of Next Bike stands. Cities are also moving towards cycling and the public are more supportive of cycling.
- In terms of management and organisational issues within the Directorate, Members ask what assurance can be given the audit processes are strong enough. The Cabinet Member stated that the HWRC issue is a technical argument based on a difference of opinion and was not a management issue. The Director advised that a criminal investigation is ongoing. Risks and gaps in oversight have been exposed. Systems will be put in place.
- The Committee asked why the assessment of progress on the bus station development was rated 'green'. The Cabinet Member stated that the funding was in place, planning permission had been approved and work had started on-site. The Director stated that the authority was aiming to provide the best bus station in the UK and it has taken some time to get the pieces in place. The completed development will be a step-change in transportation in the city.
- Members asked why staff were being 'encouraged' to uptake digital systems. The Director advised that the introduction of new system will require staff, who are accustomed to working in a particular way, to receiving training and an explanation of the benefit. These system will be better in terms of accountability. The new technology has been implemented in some areas and the Director agreed to provide details of the roll out following the meeting.
- The Committee requested further details of the commercial opportunities being explored. The Cabinet Member stated that the commercial operation bids for contracts. A contract with the Principality Stadium has been secured and there discussions are ongoing with other sports organisations based in the city. The authority has also recently launched a skip hire business which was performing very well.
- The Director confirmed that ward action plans were still being

formulated.

AGREED – That the Chairperson write to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey their comments.

54 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2018/19 and invited comments.

Members requested consideration be given to receiving agenda items on Cardiff Bus and Active Travel for Schools.

55 : CORRESPONDENCE - VERBAL UPDATE

The Committee received copies of correspondence sent and received in relation to matters previously scrutinised by this Committee.

AGREED – That the correspondence report and attached documentation be noted.

56 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

The Committee discussed the non-attendance of Cabinet Members at Scrutiny Committee meetings. Members requested that the Chairperson arrange a meeting with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport to discuss this issue further.

57 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 8 JANUARY 2019

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 8 January 2019.

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm

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