

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JUNE 2019

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

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Michael.

2 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted that Council on 23 May 2019 appointed Councillor Ramesh Patel as Chairperson of the Committee and the following Members to the Committee:

Councillors Boyle, Derbyshire, Jones, Lancaster, Owen, Jacqui Parry, Wong and Wood.

3 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee were asked to note its Terms of Reference.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was received:

Councillor Owen Jones Item 5 – Personal Interest Non-Executive Director
of Cardiff Bus

5 : PRE DECISION SCRUTINY: AIR QUALITY FEASIBILITY STUDY FINAL PLAN - FULL BUSINESS CASE & CITY CENTRE TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

*Councillor Owen Jones declared a personal interested in the following item
as a non-executive director of Cardiff Bus.*

Members were advised that the Cabinet was due to receive a report titled 'Air Quality Feasibility Study Final Plan – Full Business Case and City Centre Transport Improvement' on 13 June 2019. The Committee was asked to consider the report and the information presented and determine whether Members would wish to make any comments, observations or recommendations to the Cabinet and whether any future scrutiny of the issues discussed was merited.

The authority received a legal direction from the Welsh Government which required the Council to:

- submit initial scoping instructions by March 2018 to set out how the authority would undertake a feasibility study;

- submit an initial plan by September 2018 to set out the case for change and develop options for measures that the local authority will implement to delivery compliance with Clean Air targets in the shortest possible time;
- submit the ‘final plan’ no later than 30 June 2019 to set out in detail the preferred option for delivering compliance in the shortest possible time, including a full business case.

In developing the final plan the recommendation from the Environmental Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish report – Improving Cardiff’s Air Quality – were fully considered as part of the assessment process.

The Council submitted its initial proposals in March 2018 and the outline business case in March 2019. The Cabinet report presented the Final Business Case (FBC) for the preferred package of measures required to achieve compliance in the shortest possible timescale. Details of the improvements needed were set out in the report. However, for the work to be undertaken the Council is required to undertake a public consultation and tendering exercise for the schemes.

The key measures to be considered as the preferred option included:

- Implementation of Electric Buses
- Bus Retro Fitting Programme
- Taxi Licensing Policy and Mitigation Scheme
- City Centre Transport Improvements
- Active Travel Measures

Members were advised that a transport review of the city centre has been undertaken. The area was segmented into three manageable transport improvement project areas, namely City Centre West – Westgate Street and Central Square; City Centre North – Boulevard de Nantes, Kingsway and Castle Street; City Centre East – Dumfries Place, Station Terrace Churchill Way and Bute Terrace. A description of the transport improvement schemes for each project area and the key challenges that will also need to be addressed were detailed in the report.

Localised air quality modelling and transport modelling was undertaken using independent analysis from expert external consultants to establish the impact of the revised measures and whether compliance could be achieved by 2021. The initial plan baseline assessment indicted that on Castle Street would breach the EU limit for NO₂. The revised measures in the FBC reduced the level of NO₂ in Castle Street significantly.

Welsh Government policy stated that unless the Council can identify alternative measures to achieve compliance as quickly as a charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ) then the Welsh Government may direct the Council to introduce a CAZ. The assessments undertaken to date indicate that the non-charging measures proposed provide compliance in the same period (if not sooner) than a CAZ. Furthermore, UK Government guidance indicates that a CAZ should not be implemented if non-charging alternatives are shown to achieve compliance in the shortest time possible. Therefore, given that that the package of measures can demonstrate compliance the

Council can justify implementing them as their preferred option. The implementation of these measures would also provide wider air quality improvements across Cardiff as a whole.

A social and economic appraisal and distributional analysis were also undertaken. A summary of the appraisal and analysis was provided in the report.

It was considered important that a finalised Clean Air Strategy be included in the FBC to further support the longer term ambition of the Council to reduced NO₂ and other pollutants as low as reasonably practicable. The Clean Air Strategy will introduce strategic measures that will look to generate a positive impact to citywide air quality levels. The Strategy set out the longer term strategic measures that will contribute to wider air quality improvements. The key theme of the measures is to increase the update of sustainable and active travel modes by influencing behavioural change. The measures include implementation and enforcement of non-idling zones; installation of living walls and other green infrastructure; EV Infrastructure and Council Fleet Measures; car clubs with low emission vehicles; Air Quality Planning Guidance; and Active Schools Travel programmes.

A full public consultation exercise on the proposals has been undertaken and 1,303 responses were received. Overall the responses for the preferred option of non-charging measures were overwhelmingly supportive, particularly those measures targeted at improving emissions from buses and taxis.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport and Councillor Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing. The Cabinet Members were supported by officers. Each Cabinet Member made a brief statement.

The officers were invited to deliver a presentation on the final Clean Air Plan and City Centre Transport Improvements. Members were invited to raise questions, seek clarification or comment on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- It was noted that the Task and Finish Inquiry report was presented to the Cabinet in September 2018. A follow-up letter was sent in March 2019 and yet a response has not been provided. Members asked the Cabinet Member when a response would be provided. The Cabinet Members stated that the Council's proposals have been submitted to Welsh Government and the outcome is unknown. It is anticipated that Welsh Government will be in agreement and their response is expected at the end of July. The Cabinet Member gave an undertaking that when a response is received from Welsh Government he will respond to the Task and Finish report immediately. The Committee was asked to note that all the recommendations in their report have been tracked and are included in the final proposals submitted to Welsh Government.
- Members asked whether the completed transport interchange has been included in the transport modelling, whether the design has changed and how many movements can be expected. The Cabinet Member stated that the transport interchange has not been modelled. The Director stated that the transport interchange was integral to supporting the clean air agenda as it would shift bus

movements away from Westgate Street. However, the bus stops in Westgate Street would remain until the transport interchange is completed. The Chairperson stated that the diagrams and maps of the proposals provided to the Committee gave the impression that the modelling included the transport interchange. Officers agreed to clarify this point and provide a written response to the Committee.

- Members asked whether there were enough electric charging points to accommodate the forecasted move away from fossil fuels. Officers stated that the Council is replacing its fleet with electric vehicles and charging points would be provided across the Council estate to accommodate this. Bus and taxis will need their own charging points and that would also be part of the agenda.
- Officer confirmed that the strategy involves active engagement with neighbouring authorities. Smart road corridors, such as the A470, will organise the movement of traffic into the city and manage movement in an orderly fashion.
- Members noted that the proposal for Castle Street displaced 30% of traffic during peak times. Members asked whether this would increase pollution in other areas. Officers stated that there would be wider impacts but there would not be any significant detriment in order areas. These impacts will be closely monitored and, if necessary, further mitigations could be introduced.
- Officers were asked whether any consideration was being given to allow electric vehicles using bus lanes and/or bus gates. The Cabinet Member stated that any such proposal would need to be carefully consider as there was a balance to be struck. Dr Tom Parker stated that in terms of managing air quality, electric vehicles were not pollutant free, particularly in terms of PM2.5 particles. Therefore encouraging the use of private electric vehicles is not be the entire solution.
- A Member expressed support for the proposals but questioned whether the consultation has been 'slightly skewed'.
- Officers were asked to clarify how removing lanes of traffic in Castle Street would be off benefit, as if the same amount of traffic continued to use Castle Street this would result in traffic queuing for longer periods and create more pollution as a result. Members were advised that removing 2 lanes of traffic would remove capacity and road area. This proposal has a major impact on air quality modelling. There will be some queuing but that would not increase the level of NO₂. The modelling also included a 3.5% modal shift so people would also change to sustainable modes of transport.
- Member asked officers to explain how private vehicles would be able to access Westgate Street. Officers stated that Westgate Street would remain accessible but a bus gate at the southern end would prevent through movements of traffic. Members questioned whether this would cause difficulties for vehicles trying to get into and out of Westgate Street. Officers did not expect people to behave in the same way and it was anticipated that behaviours would change.

- The Committee raised concerns regarding the decision to hold the public consultation exercise on the proposals during June and July. Members considered that it was best practice not have public consultations during the summer months. Officers stated that due to the timescales involved it was necessary to go to public consultation in June and July to allow the procurement phase to begin in September. There has already been early engagement and consultation is ongoing.
- Officers advised that, in terms of taxi vehicles, owner/drivers would apply to apply for a grant towards the cost of a new electric or hybrid vehicle as a contribution towards licensing fees, insurance and other running costs. Such grants would be conditional and would be available only for vehicles registered in Cardiff, not in neighbouring authorities.
- Members asked officers to explain the logic behind the decision to maintain a ban on cyclists in Queen Street and to route cyclists around the City Centre via Boulevard de Nantes instead. The Cabinet Member stated that Queen Street presented some difficulties as he often received complaints from members of the public who feel unsafe as a result of cyclist riding through the pedestrianised shopping area. At present there was not safe alternative for cyclists but the proposal would provide an alternative. A member considered that past experience has demonstrated that when cyclists are expected to take a longer route, as opposed to a direct route, they never do. The Member also considered that there was some inconsistency in the approach being applied as cyclists were permitted to use other pedestrianised areas in the City Centre such as The Hayes. The Cabinet Member accepted that point and stated that there was a balance to be found.
- The Committee noted that under the CAZ scheme there would be an impact from diversionary traffic using other areas. Members asked what percentage of the existing traffic was expected to disperse to other areas. The officer stated that there was indeed a diversionary element. The officer did not have the figure in terms of a percentage but agreed write to the Committee with this information.
- A Member stated that it was their understanding that static or idle traffic caused more pollution. However, if the proposal was to remove a lane on North Road and Castle Street, what analysis has been undertaken to ensure that this would not worsen the situation. Officers stated that modelling has taken this into account and it has shown that there would be no impact. Traffic in these areas is already idling at high volumes. If the volume of traffic is removed by reducing capacity then modelling shows a 30% improvement in air quality in those areas.
- Members asked what consideration was given to the size of the CAZ. Officers stated that the Welsh Government's direction requires that the Council to assess a CAZ – but any response to tackling compliance would need to be proportionate and not have broader impacts. The Director stated that as one street was not compliant the introduction of a CAZ in the City Centre would be disproportionate.
- Members noted that there were no safe levels of NO₂ and PM2.5 and asked whether there was a moral case for improving air quality further, beyond compliance with limits. The Cabinet Member agreed and stated that the

proposals represented the start of the journey and the Council is fundamentally committed to improving air quality. Officer stated that the Air Quality Plan does go beyond compliance. The authority is very aware of the importance of the issue and the wider health benefits.

- Member questioned whether a comparison between a CAZ and the preferred method was a worthy comparison, as the 2 options were not directly comparable. The Cabinet Member stated that Welsh Government's guidance was clear in that a CAZ can only be considered if the non-charging alternatives cannot achieve compliance.
- The Committee asked whether the retro-fitting of buses would be mandatory for all bus operators in the City. Members were advised that the scheme would be open to all operators but if uptake was not sufficient then alternatives would need to be considered.
- Members asked whether the re-routing of traffic would impact on schools and when air quality monitoring outside school would begin. Officers advised that monitoring was taking place. There were 9 schools targeted in Client Earth's Toxic Playground report. 12 months of monitoring is to be presented that indicated no schools were exceeding limits.
- The Committee considered that it was important to put the cost benefits of the scheme in terms of benefits to the health service into the public domain.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member conveying their observations.

6 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

7 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 2 July 2019 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified