

Ref: RDB/RP/MM/07.05.2019

14 May 2019

Councillor Michael Michael,
Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Michael,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 7th May 2019

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 7th May 2019 to discuss the items on the 'Planning, Transport & Environment – Directorate Delivery Plan – 2019/20' and the 'Draft Shared Regulatory Services – Business Plan 2019/20'. 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 Delivery Plan – 2019/20

The Committee asked for a progress update on the delivery of ward based action plans. They were told that these would be delivered within six months, however, they would be area based rather than ward based. An officer went on to explain that the roll out had been delayed to ensure that the area based action plans were developed using accurate information. I would be grateful if you could confirm a start date for the area based action plans, along with details on the services involved and geographical boundaries allocated for each action plan. In addition to this the Committee asks that you make the roll out of the scheme available for scrutiny before the end of 2019.

Members asked during this item what could be done to improve the accuracy and speed of waste data collected for both commercial and domestic waste streams. An officer explained that it was possible to tell immediately how much overall waste was collected, however, waste data flow needed actual quantities for specific materials – to make this more complicated, for the

material to count towards recycling figures it had to be supported by a processing receipt. Members then asked if it was possible to provide recycling statistics by ward and were told that it was not. This created some confusion during the way forward as several Members seemed to think that they had been shown ward based recycling rates in the past. To resolve this confusion I would be grateful if you could confirm if it is still possible to provide ward based recycling rates, and if it isn't to provide an explanation as to what has changed since ward based recycling rates were published in the past.

A Member commented on the importance of producing local food and then asked what the Council was doing to encourage local food production. An officer explained that a Food Strategy was being developed and that it would be presented to Cabinet in the summer. With this in mind it would be appreciated if you could ask officers to liaise with Scrutiny Services to arrange pre decision scrutiny on Cardiff's new Food Strategy.

One of the Members asked a question about the large number of missed collections that recently took place on a Saturday after the bank holiday in North Cardiff. In particular, he referred to the fact that after raising a query on the matter it took 12 days for an officer response. He was told that there had been issues with vehicle breakdowns, staff availability and sickness, with the officer then explaining that an action plan was being developed to prevent such an event happening in future. To help provide the Committee with assurance that this will not be repeated I would be grateful if you could provide them with a copy of the action plan once it is completed.

Draft Shared Regulatory Services – Business Plan 2019/20

Members were concerned to hear that the service had experienced some recent issues around recruitment and retention, particularly for the Food Hygiene Service that is in the process of recruiting five new officers to replace staff who had left to pursue other employment opportunities. They hope that the current recruitment process is successful and that the temporary reduction in staff does not have a negative impact on the Food Hygiene Service's ability to carry out all of the necessary visits. They ask that the Shared Regulatory

Service undertakes a short review to assess what can be done to prevent such a sudden loss of staff in future, and that they share any findings and future actions from this work with the Committee.

During the meeting officers explained that the Shared Regulatory Service had a supply of 'cold calling zone stickers' that they could make available to any councillors who wanted them to distribute in their wards. The Committee thought that this would be very popular with local councillors and have asked for a supply to be sent to Cardiff Council's Member Services. On arrival, Member Services could send out a short email explaining that they are available to all councillors for collection and distribution.

At the meeting a Member expressed his frustration at the outcome of a recent illegal tobacco investigation in his ward in which the Shared Regulatory Service had played a major role. He commented that they had caught the shop owner selling illegal tobacco, confiscated the contraband and then fined him £2,000. Despite this, it was obvious that the shop owner had quickly restocked and continued with the illegal trade. The fine and inconvenience were merely 'a part of the business plan'. The Member felt that the service needed to be able to apply more sanctions and pressure, but was told that this would not be possible as a dedicated resource would be required. This is something that is not affordable within the constraints of the current Shared Regulatory Service budget. An officer went on to explain that such an operation would only work if new powers were introduced in Wales, it was properly funded and supported by trading standards professionals. On this basis, the Committee ask that you work with the Shared Regulatory Service to lobby Welsh Government for more powers and money to tackle the illegal tobacco trade, because without such an investment the problem will persist.

The Committee is concerned that the future of the 'Out of Hours' service looks uncertain due to financial and other pressures. Members believe that this is an important service, which if lost would make it difficult to tackle a wide range of late night anti-social behaviour. Should a proposal be put forward to close the 'Out of Hours Service', then I would ask that you inform the Committee

directly before a decision is taken so that scrutiny can be undertaken on the matter.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the content of this letter. Some of the information in this letter has been included in the letters to Councillors Wild, Mackie and Thorne, therefore, I am happy to receive a combined response to the relevant parts.

Regards,

Handwritten signature of Ramesh Patel in black ink.

Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Andrew Gregory - Director of Planning, Transport & Environment
- Matt Wakelam – Assistant Director, Street Scene
- Jane Cherrington - Operational Manager, Waste Strategy & Enforcement
- Dave Holland – Head of the Shared Regulatory Service
- Christina Hill – Operational Manager, Commercial Services
- Helen Picton – Operational Manager, Enterprise & Specialist Services
- Will Lane – Operational Manager, Neighbourhood Services
- Davina Fiore - Director of Governance & Legal Services
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee