

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

5 JANUARY 2021

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

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2 : APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERSHIP

Members noted that on 26 November 2020 at the Annual meeting of the Council Councillor Ramesh Patel was appointed as Chair of the Committee.

The following Membership was agreed:

Councillors Derbyshire, Jones, Lancaster, Owen, Parkhill, Jacqui Parry, Sandrey and (1 vacancy)

3 : TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were asked to note the Committees Terms of Reference.

4 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

5 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 3 November, 1 December and 8 December 2020 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

6 : CARDIFF TRANSPORT WHITE PAPER - ONE YEAR UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing an update on the progress made in delivering Cardiff's Transport White Paper in terms of the challenges faced during 2020 and the next steps for 2021.

The report summarised the Committee's previous consideration of this item. Members were advised that in January 2020 the Committee reviewed a draft paper titled 'Transport White Paper: Transport Vision 2030'. The paper explored the reasons for changing Cardiff's approach to transport; discussed city growth; set out four key areas where change was required; linked the paper into the Cardiff Council Corporate Plan priority of 'A Capital City that works for Wales'; and provided a delivery / funding timeline.

Preceding the Transport White Paper, the Transport and Clean Air Green Paper recognised the importance of transport in creating a healthy, sustainable and prosperous capital city. A consultation exercise on the Green Paper generated 3,500 responses. This high number of responses provided an indication of how transport impacts on the lives of people across Cardiff and the wider region and the importance of tackling the challenges presented by the City's existing transport infrastructure.

Members were advised that Cardiff has already achieved sustainable patterns of modal shift. Travel to work data for Cardiff demonstrated a trend of modal shift to active and sustainable modes. For example, there has been a significant increase in cycling. However, it is acknowledged that more action was needed to ensure that Cardiff continues to develop as a successful city.

The draft 'Transport White Paper: Transport Vision 2030' builds on the work of the Transport & Clean Air Green Paper and sets out a series of priorities for Cardiff over the next 10 years which aim to transform the way people move around the city, reducing dependency on private cars, whilst adopting active travel and public transport through investment in transport projects. It was estimated that delivering the vision set out in the draft 'Transport White Paper' would require a significant increase in funding, with an estimated investment of between £1 - 2bn necessary to deliver the scale of improvements required.

The Four priority projects are for Cardiff are:

- Cardiff Crossrail - A Cardiff Crossrail tram line which would connect the city's newest communities, as well as providing links to the city centre and key business developments for some of the city's most deprived communities. The line could also extend beyond Cardiff's boundaries, connecting the city with the wider region, for example, new housing developments in Rhondda Cynon Taff.
- Circle Line - The Cardiff Circle Line would connect the Coryton Line to the Taff Vale Line north of Radyr to deliver cross city connectivity. This would provide new park and ride opportunities from J32 of the M4 and allow for more frequent services on the Coryton and City lines.
- Rapid Bus Transport - Rapid Bus Transport will provide cleaner, greener vehicles, travelling on dedicated bus corridors with smart network management giving buses priority. New park and ride facilities will connect the city with the wider region including, for example, Junction 33. The new Central Bus Station will be completed in 2022.
- Active Travel - Active Travel to enable more people to walk and cycle for more journeys, making Cardiff safer, cleaner and quieter. Investment in five fully segregated cycle ways and a network of supporting routes, as well as interventions to provide high quality facilities for walking will contribute towards the targets set for active travel.

The Transport White Paper also outlined an number of key actions that would help deliver the change required. These actions were set out in the report.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport and Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment and Paul Carter, Head of Transport to the meeting. The Cabinet Member and the Director were invited to make statements.

The Chairperson opened the debate on this item. Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked how consultation has been undertaken with elected members concerning the roll out of transportation programmes in their wards. The Director stated that the roll out of EV charging points has been accompanied with extensive local ward member consultation. The Director accepted that there have been instances on some schemes where there should have been more engagement with local members. The Head of Transport advised that in wards receiving new infrastructure reasonable consultation has been undertaken with local members. Members commented that there was a difference between being notified of scheme and meaningful consultation. The Director agreed to reflect on those comments.
- Members asked whether the Transport White Paper would need to be revised in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Director stated that it was too early to say whether the Transport White Paper would need to be revised, but in terms of the delivery of the projects, the pandemic has not caused a significant delay. There may be some changes in behaviour that will need to be assessed post-pandemic which may affect progress against the targets in the White Paper.
- Members asked which transportation area has struggled the most during the pandemic. The Head of Transport stated that evidence suggests that bus and rail have suffered more than most due to more people homeworking or being furloughed. The Welsh Government has recognised this and has brought in bus emergency support funding for bus services that has enabled bus operators to continue providing services. This has had an effect on the intention to double the number of bus services but has been compensated by an increase in the number of people cycling. The Chairperson asked how the pandemic has affected transportation services internally. For example, how it has affected the highways programme. The Director stated that front line staff who have engagement with members of the public have been affected most. The service area is seeking to move forward with the highways programme. The Chairperson indicated that the Committee would normally be given an opportunity to scrutinise the highways programme but the programme has not yet been received, despite assurances from officers.
- Members asked whether there have been discussions with network rail regarding connectivity with bus services and a scheme of integrated ticketing. The Director stated that through the work of the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales there is movement towards an integrated bus and rail network. It is a priority for the Council and the Welsh Government. However, there is no detailed strategy yet.

- Members asked whether there was any likelihood of cycling infrastructure being included on the Llanrumney bridge project. The Director confirmed that cycling infrastructure would be included in the project and there was also an opportunity to increase cycling infrastructure on the Rumney River corridor and east-west under the A48. Officers are looking at a comprehensive cycling network that would complement the delivery of the bridge.
- Members were advised that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on the viability of public transport provision. The loss of parking income, ring-fenced for transport and active projects, has increased potential risk to those projects. Officers have acted corporately to mitigate those risks and the impact has largely been avoided.
- The Committee sought clarification of the reasons for delays in the delivery of active travel schemes and cycleways. The Director acknowledged that there have been some delays but the service area is seeking funding and delivery teams to mitigate against those delays. Some cycling superhighways, such as Newport Road, are being redesigned.
- A Member asked that where new cycleways are being developed, how the Council mitigating again the impact of those projects on bus services. The Director stated that there was no intention for cycling to disadvantage bus services. The Head of Transport stated that the Albany Road scheme related to a reallocation of space on the street scene, particularly parking space. There is a balance to be struck to allow greater numbers of people to use bus services.
- The Chairperson requested an update on the next bike scheme and asked whether the scheme has been affected by the pandemic. The Head of Transport accepted that there has been an impact. The scheme was affected by the first lockdown but numbers did start to recover. Next Bike is managing to get turnover on their bikes and the intention is still to extend the scheme. Electric bikes are also being introduced.
- How has the pandemic changed the projected number of commuters and public transport users. The Director stated that the service area has held extensive discussions with businesses based in the city centre and there is no single view regarding the number commuters in the city. These changes can be mapped in the future. However, there was an acceptance that more people will work from home more often thereby impacting on the number of commuters. The Council considers that the City Centre is still vibrant and viable and that people will still want to visit the city centre. How the City Centre is used may change and the authority needs to be agile with regard to how services respond to those changes.
- Members questioned whether the estimate for the total amount of investment required in the Transport White Paper had changed in the past year and whether the sources of funding change if we enter a recession. The Director stated that detailed work was being undertaken in terms of the development of the Metro system and those costs are unlikely to shrink. A view needs to be taken around whether this is a time to cut back on infrastructure investment or whether to invest strategically in transport infrastructure following years of under-investment. The Director suggested that the argument in support of investment has increased.

Transport increases productivity and efficiency and there would be a return on any investment made as the productivity of the whole region will increase. The Head of Transport stated that the Burns Report supported the case for 'levelling up' with competitors in England in terms of infrastructure provision.

- Members requested further details on the timeline for the roll out of 20mph zones and a list of streets included. The Head of Planning advised that the ambition is to deliver 20mph zones across the whole city in the next 10 years. Significant progress has been made in inner wards has been delivered. The authority is awaiting the Welsh Government to announce its default position on 20mph in 2023. Officers were confident that 20mph zones would be delivered across the city over the period of the Transport White paper. Members were advised that Welsh Government recognises that there is an issue to be addressed in terms of enforcement. The Head of Transport undertook to provide specific details in terms of the timeline and streets included following the meeting,
- Members asked whether there are any plans for an east/west bus route in the City. The Head of Transport confirmed that such a route would be a key in terms of bus priority routes and support modal shift, possibly providing links with park and ride sites also. A new Bus Strategy for the City is being developed over the next 12 months.
- Members asked how secure will the new electric next bikes will be. The Head of Transport stated that a lot has been learned from the roll out of the conventional next bike scheme. It was acknowledged that there have been some problems. Electric bikes sites will be located close to CCTV and will use GPS to bolster security.
- The Director advised Members that the bus station would be completed in autumn 2022. At that point Welsh Government will take responsibility for the 'fit out' of the building.
- Members raised concerns regarding the impact removing parking provision would have on elderly and those with mobility issues. The Director stated that a balance needs to be struck in consultation with local businesses and communities. For instance, in the Wellfield Road Scheme same parking has been reinstated whilst pavements have been widened and facilities for buses and cycling have been improved. The ambition is to create viable district centres that are safe for local people. The Head of Transport confirmed that consultation on these schemes is being undertaken with the Older Persons Commissioner. The Cabinet Member stated that older people have indicated their preference for improved bus service and wider pavements during consultations.
- Members asked how financial pressures are likely to affect the discounted £1 bus fare schemes. Officers advised that the authority would welcome bus operators continuing with those discounted fare schemes. However, it was recognised that trading conditions have been difficult during the pandemic.
- Members asked White Paper proposals align with Welsh Government strategy. The Head of Transport stated that the White Paper proposals are complimentary

to Welsh Government strategy.

- Members asked to what extent will bus companies be involved with the draft of the new Bus Strategy in terms of consultation and inception. Officers stated that there was an ambitious proposal to double the number of bus passengers. A lot of investment is geared towards facilitating a new bus network. All bus operators are being consulted as they are an important part of this initiative. It is important that the network delivers services required by bus operators and passengers.
- Members asked whether the pandemic has affected income predictions and the business case for the rapid bus regional network as this was to be funded by ring-fenced low-emissions levies. The Director stated that regional bus network proposals were aligned with a discussion around road-use charging. That is still a possibility but the pandemic has changed the parameters in terms of demand on the network. The regional bus network is not considered to be a priority at present. However, it is likely to come forward as a priority at some point in the future.

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

7 : SOUTH WALES METRO - MEMBER BRIEFING

The Committee received a briefing report providing an update on the progress of the South Wales Metro, the regional integrated public transport network for the Cardiff Capital Region. Cardiff Metro aims to be a world-class transport network that will transform people's lives in Wales and the borders, improving access to job, leisure and other opportunities and also transform Wales' economic prospects.

It is estimated that South Wales Metro will take around 5 years to be completed. There are significant construction, engineering and infrastructure upgrades required to the rail network including electrification of 170km of track, upgrades to stations and signalling and building at least 5 new stations.

Members were advised that work has started on the construction of a £100 million depot and control centre in Taff Well. The depot will house the new Metro trains as well as 400 train crew, 35 maintenance staff and 52 Metro Control Centre staff. Metro will deliver a number of benefits including more frequent services and greater capacity. A list of other benefits as set out in the report.

The Chairperson welcomed Professor Mark Barry to the meeting along with the Cabinet Member Strategic Planning & Transport and officers from the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate. The invited attendees provided an update on the progress of the South Wales Metro project, followed by a comprehensive question and answer session.

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

8 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

The Principal Scrutiny Officer asked Members to agree the letter setting out the Committee's observations in relation to the One Planet Cardiff strategy.

9 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 23 FEBRUARY 2021

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 23rd February at 4:30pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.15 pm