

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 MARCH 2021

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

9 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Parkhill

10 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

11 : CABINET RESPONSE - ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
REPORT TITLED 'MANAGING BIODIVERSITY & NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT IN CARDIFF'

Members were advised that this was an opportunity to consider the Cabinet response to the Environmental Scrutiny Committee report titled 'Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff'.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment and officers from the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate to the meeting. (Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment, Jon Maidment, Simon Gilbert, Nicola Hutchinson).

The Cabinet Member wished Richard Bowen all the very best for the future as he would be leaving his post imminently.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Environment made a statement in which he said that from the Service Area's perspective, this was a crucial agenda, they have answered the response in a detailed way to get the right balance. This would be picked up further in One Planet Cardiff, embedded corporately, and aligned to get the best value for the City.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members discussed the £400k in the budget and asked if this would make any differences to the recommendations that were partially accepted due to finances and resources. Members were advised that the funding for One Planet Cardiff and was in the early stages; it was for posts relating to One Planet Cardiff and the EV rollout; there was lots of work ongoing supporting the biodiversity agenda such as Clean Air Strategy, there was also some Capital work too. In relation to Parks, Officers advised that the funding had been beneficial, and they have also put bids into the Woodland Trust and ENRAW which could increase the tree canopy from 19% to 23% in the City. There was also budget for Policy Growth for the Parks Service for 4FTE's (3 plus 1 trainee) which all helps the agenda.

Members were still concerned about resources and pressures and considered more people in posts were needed to be able to deliver Carbon Neutral by 2030. Officers agreed to keep Members informed if any work comes in that requires a biodiversity Officer, those conversations would then take place.

Members asked why the recommendation referencing Volunteers was only partially accepted. Members were advised that the service area works with volunteers very regularly and they do an amazing job for the City. It was noted that there would be limitations on the amount of support that could be offered to volunteer groups with limited staff but officers will try and harness the interest of these groups as best they can going forward.

Members referred to Planning Policy Wales 11 and asked how they strengthen the recommendations. Officers advised that these had very recently come into force, as had the Equality Impact National Development Plan for Wales; colleagues were preparing a comprehensive briefing note to share with all Members on the changes. The changes were mainly transition with emphasis on place making and a commitment to promoting biodiversity in the planning process. Cardiff Council's policy framework was consistent with this approach and the service area will continue to embed biodiversity in its policy framework.

Members asked what efforts had been made to feed the recommendations on biodiversity into the consultation process. Officers advised that the Council is a consultee and has engaged with Welsh Government colleagues and the responses are aligned with Cardiff Council's comments generally. Discussions are ongoing with Welsh Government on how it all drives forward but all comments will be considered.

Members asked about remediation works on the River Rhydney and Officers agreed to find out and let Members know outside of the Committee meeting.

Members discussed recommendation 18a and the creation of accessible new habitats. Members asked that local Members are consulted before areas are considered for 'wilding, no cutting and planting more wild flowers' especially when they are in close proximity to people's homes. Officers explained that they do consult but they can always do more. Officers explained the process of scoping areas for consideration and how they would be managed; sites will be surveyed and monitored.

Members noted that biodiversity was not considered part of the Climate Emergency and asked how the two could be differentiated. Members were advised that it was a holistic picture and approach; all agree on the critical nature of the issues and the importance of finding an effective way to address them. Officers considered they do not need to split strategies, they need to embed the right strategy; most of this will be picked up in One Planet Cardiff but if Members have any specific concerns they can contact Officers who will work through them.

Members referred to recommendation 8b, enhancing the environmental goals of the LDP and were surprised by the response to this. Officers agreed that the response was bit generic, but explained that the vision and energy for the new LDP fully picks up the Biodiversity agenda and it was important to recognise that not all actions required stem back to the LDP and to look at the whole policy context with partners.

Members referred to recommendation 8c, PPW11 and asked if it gives enough detail to allay Committee's concerns with regard to PPW10. Officers explained it is a National document and is not meant to address specific community concerns, that would be for development plans to address. It is a strategic document looking at active travel, place making, local services for local people etc.

Members asked if the Cardiff Local Nature Partnership was up and running. Officers explained it was, Cllr Derbyshire was Chair. It had been a difficult year last year and meetings had been held virtually. Plans were in place for the coming year and the steering group would be more focussed on specific projects. It is a grant funded project so it does have an end date.

Members asked how the Scrutiny Committee could contribute to the LDP. Officers explained there were a number of stages, many of which require Cabinet/Council approval. Officers suggested a similar approach to the previous LDP, seeking early engagement with Scrutiny Chairs to determine the best fit for scrutiny engagement.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

12 : SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE APPROVAL BODY (SAB) - ADOPTION & FUTURE MAINTENANCE OF SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE (SUDS) FEATURES

It was noted that this item was originally included on the agenda at the point of publication, however, since then it has been decided that more work is required on the report before it is presented at Cabinet. This means that the item will no longer be scrutinised at this meeting, but may be available at a future scrutiny meeting.

13 : CONTRACT & LEASE FOR GREEN ELECTRICITY GENERATION FROM LANDFILL GAS & LANDFILL GAS MANAGEMENT AT LAMBY WAY

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided Members with a briefing note on the Cabinet report that relates to 'Contract & lease for Green Electricity Generation from Landfill Gas & Landfill Gas Management at Lamby Way'. Members were asked to note the content of the report and suggest any future actions relating to the item.

Members noted the recommendation to go with the existing provider due to the lack of ROC credit.

Members found it frustrating that the ROC cannot be transferred, meaning hands were tied in relation to renegotiating the contract.

Members noted that the agreement ends in 2028, the Government Incentive ends on 2028 so it would be appropriate to look at best options available after that date.

14 : REPLACEMENT OF THE RECYCLING & REFUSE COLLECTION FLEET

The Principal Scrutiny Officer provided Members with a briefing note on the Cabinet report that relates to 'Replacement of the Recycling & Refuse Collection Fleet'. Members were asked to note the content of the report and suggest any future actions relating to the item.

Members asked about timescales and were advised that it would be a two year phased approach.

Members were advised that previously a whole fleet had been bought in one go and this meant that they all aged at the same time, so a phased approach offered more flexibility with the development of Electric Vehicles and new technology opportunities that were being developed by a whole host of organisations.

15 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME PLANNING

It was noted that the next Scrutiny Committee was scheduled for 11 May 2021.

Members discussed various topics of interest including Shared Regulatory Services – Covid Response; Waste Management – Glass and new collection system; PPW11- department's response and implications for the LDP; Task and Finish on contribution to LDP and LDP Best Practice.

It was noted that any further suggestions should be sent to Gary Jones – Head of Democratic Services as Richard Bowen will be leaving his post imminently.

16 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

The Chairperson wished to thank Richard Bowen for all his support and hard work over the years and wished him all the very best for the future on behalf of himself and the Committee Members.

17 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 11 MAY 2021

The meeting terminated at 6.00 pm