

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 FEBRUARY 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 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations were made in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct:

Councillor Owen Jones	Item 4	Personal	Non-Executive Director of Cardiff Bus
Councillor Sandrey	Item 4	Personal	Non-Executive Director of Cardiff Buss

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2021 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

4 : DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021-22 - CORPORATE OVERVIEW

The Committee received a report providing context for the scrutiny of those sections of the Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2021 to 2024 and the Draft Cabinet 2021/22 budget consultation insofar as they relate to those functions under the remit of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that in July 2017 the Cabinet set out a policy programme and associated delivery commitments entitled 'Capital Ambition'. This established the Cabinet's key priorities for the municipal term and outlined a programme to continue to drive the city economy forward, whilst ensuring the benefits of success are felt by all residents. Capital Ambition was refreshed in February 2021 to reflect the continuing commitments for the administration.

The four main areas forming the basis of the Corporate Plan 2021-24 are:

- Working for Cardiff – Cardiff is a great place to grow up, grow older, supporting people out of poverty, safe, confident and empowered communities.
- Working for Wales – A Capital City that works for Wales

- Working for the Future – Cardiff’s population growth is managed in a resilient way
- Working for Public Services – Modernising and integrating our public services.

The Corporate Plan and the Well-being Plan are key documents in delivering Capital Ambition, as they translate the administration’s priorities into deliverable organisational objectives. The Well-being of Future Generations Act places a statutory duty on Public Bodies to publish well-being objectives. The Corporate Plan also sets out the Performance Measures and targets that will enable the Council, and its scrutiny committees, to monitor delivery.

The report provided a summary of the authority’s financial position, a summary of the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic that continues to have a significant financial impact and an update on Brexit.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver, Cabinet Member for Finance; Chris Lee, Corporate Director Resources and Ian Allwood, Head of Finance to the meeting. The officers were invited to deliver a presentation. The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members noted the financial support received from Welsh Government during the Covid-19 pandemic. Members asked whether the Welsh Government had given any indication that there would be financial support in the longer term to deal with the aftermath of the pandemic. The Head of Finance stated that some consequential funding has been set aside by Welsh Government for specific purposes and further announcements were anticipated in terms of the additional pressures faced.
- Members sought confirmation of the projected return on the £374 million allocated to invest to save schemes. Members were advised that the amount of investment made on any invest to save scheme will be recouped over a number of years. The timeframe will vary depending on the specific scheme. The Head of Finance agreed to provide more detail upon request.
- Officers were asked to explain how the 1% efficiency saving in schools would be achieved. The Head of Finance stated that the 1% saving was not targeted at specific areas of school funding. Members were asked to note that despite the 1% efficiency saving there was still a net growth in school budgets of approximately £6.5 million.
- Members noted the additional resources provided to support the One Planet Cardiff Strategy. Members asked whether One Planet Cardiff prioritisation was made with a view to the public consultation. The Cabinet Member for Finance indicated that the prioritisation was not a reflection of the budget consultation. The authority must ensure that the One Planet Cardiff policy is not ‘stand-alone’ in terms of the Council’s. There are elements to the strategy that will require some specific resource and some key posts have been identified by the service area. The One Planet Strategy ultimately aims to set out the vision to decarbonise the authority and the city as a whole and that will require every directorate to take the

strategy into consideration.

- Members were surprised that climate change was rated 5th priority in the budget consultation. The Cabinet Member was asked whether a public awareness campaign on the importance of climate change was merited. The Cabinet Member accepted that climate change may not have been prioritised as highly as might be expected. The consultation demonstrated that people clearly considered that the economy, supporting young people and making people feel safe were higher priorities this year. The budget consultation exercise was also considered in line with a range of other consultations undertaken.
- Members asked whether consideration been given to looking at alternatives to subsidising underused bus routes, such as demand responsive transport, and whether demand for buses routes post pandemic has been factored in. The Cabinet Member stated that financial support for subsidised bus routes had been budgeted for a 2-year period to allow for Welsh Government to reregulating the industry. That reregulation did not materialise and the Cabinet decided it was right to continue to provide the subsidy in order to avoid disruption for people relying on the services. The Cabinet Member considered that public transport would be vital in future years, although it was accepted that this particular model of funding may be discontinued.
- The Committee asked whether funds received from Welsh Government during the pandemic were ring-fenced. The Head of Finance stated that the hardship funding was ring-fenced to additional expenditure or lost income as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Cabinet Member accepted that the later announcement of the budget settlement this year there was less opportunity for Scrutiny Committees to be involved in the budget setting process. However, Scrutiny Members involvement is always welcomed and it was hoped for much more significant involvement in the future.
- Members asked whether the authority is taking advantage of low interest rates by refinancing borrowing and whether there were any risks in doing that. The Cabinet Member stated that some savings have been achieved by repaying capital early. However, this was not being replaced by other borrowing. The borrowing proposed is being made to invest in the City's future by providing housing, transport infrastructure, school and economic redevelopment. A number of these projects are on an invest to save basis. The Head of Finance stated that the majority of savings relate to paying off invest to save schemes ahead of schedule. The Corporate Director Resources stated that debt rescheduling is a budget management tool but the opportunities to undertake debt rescheduling have reduced because the authority is tied into lower rates of borrowing.

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.

5 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2024 AND DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021-2022

Planning, Transport and Environment

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport and officers from the Planning, Transport and Environment directorate.

Following a brief statement by the Cabinet Member, the Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on how and where 'low traffic neighbourhoods' would be implemented. The Cabinet Member stated that public interest in low traffic neighbourhoods has been consistently expressed and the authority is considering introducing some pilot schemes. Cardiff Council will engage with communities before implementing such schemes.
- A Member asked whether funding allocated to footways would be put towards new footway or upgrading existing footways. The Assistant Director Planning Transport and Environment stated that as a result of the coronavirus pandemic the authority has suspended works on footway renewal projects. The funding has been carried forward. New footway schemes are funding by Welsh Government. The funding is being targeted towards the removal of concrete slabs and replacement by asphalt as concrete slabs can cause problems for people with mobility issues. Local members will be advised where these works at to take place. A general degradation of the footways in the city was noted. Members asked officers to also note the problems cause by tree roots.
- Members noted that delay in the Lamby Way Solar Farm project. Members asked for an update on the position. The Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Environment advised that the private wire connection to the adjacent waste water facility is a construction issue and there are significant cost implications. Negotiations with the contractor on how best to achieve the required connections and also keep costs to a minimum are ongoing. The electricity being generated is currently be supplied to the national grid. The private wire connection will improve the project's profitability.
- The Committee asked for further details on where slippage has occurred in the capital programme. The Director of Strategy Planning, Transport and Environment stated that there has been slippage on highways works and improvement works in an around the City Centre during to difficulties getting staff and contractors on-site as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. As much as possible has been reintegrated into the programme of works for the coming year. The Head of Finance indicated that the Month 9 budget monitoring report sets out details of the slippage across capital schemes and how that has occurred. There is also slippage related to grant funding being received from Welsh Government late in the financial year.
- Members asked whether there has been an in-depth assessment of potential efficiencies. The Director stated that the directorate has undertaken efficiency savings for a number of years and it was difficult to find new efficiency savings.

However, the directorate is always looking at opportunities to generate more income and work more efficiently.

- Officers confirmed that the directorate does work in partnership with South Wales Police with regard to problem parking on pavements. The directorate is also seeking to identify areas where pavement slabs are in need of replacements due to persistent parking on pavements.
- Members asked officers to provide further detail on the strategy for 'intelligent transport systems' as set out in the Corporate Plan. The Director stated that the strategy is a corporate wide initiative that brings together a number of different elements from across directorates. The intention is to map out what an intelligent transport network would look like, particularly network management and active travel. The intention is to have a strategy in place by the end of 2021.
- Members noted that a number of projects were being undertaken during the year. Officers were asked whether there was capacity within the directorate to deliver the wide number of projects being undertaken. The Director stated that the directorate is focussed on delivering £52 million of capital spend on a number of schemes and the directorate was mindful of the resources required to deliver those schemes. This has been recognised corporately also and support has been provided accordingly.
- Members asked what quantity and type of electric vehicles were the directorate looking to purchase over the next 12 months. Officers advised that the Corporate Plan included a target of 90, mainly smaller vehicles. Options for larger vehicles were also being considered as part of a wider strategy, including an 'electric first' principle. Additional funding has also been secured to provide electric charging infrastructure at the CTS depot and other facilities.
- Members noted that additional funding for One Planet Cardiff was allocated to the Strategic Planning, Transport and Environment but the One Planet Cardiff strategy was a corporate initiative. Members asked for a breakdown of how that funding would be used. The Director stated that One Planet Cardiff has 20 key projects, mostly shared or led by other directorates. The funding relates to project lead officers on the Food Strategy and the One Planet Strategy and White Paper. There was also a permanent One Planet Co-ordinator post and additional funding for cross-directorate project working.
- Officers provided an update on the directorate involvement with the Churchill Way scheme.
- Officers agreed to provide Members with a written response on a questions in relation to the blue badge scheme and the uplift of the infrequent users parking permit scheme.

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.

Clean Street, Recycling and Environment

The Chairperson welcome Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment and officers from the directorate.

Following a statement from the Cabinet Member, the Committee were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Responding to a question from the Committee, the Cabinet Member stated that work was ongoing in preparing the Food Strategy. The Director advised that the Food Strategy would include two key themes: food growing and schools.
- The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council are considering options for a replacement Cardiff Dogs Home.
- Members noted the role played by Shared Regulatory Services during the pandemic. Members asked whether SRS would be able to maintain their usual levels of service or whether they would be receiving additional support. The Assistant Director stated that SRS have diverted a number of officers into Covid-19 enforcement and regulation. Those officers have been redeployed from areas where there has been a reduction in workload, such as food hygiene inspections. It was anticipated that there will be a considerable backlog of core programme of work when businesses reopen. Officers confirmed that if Welsh Government were to introduce longer-term covid-related regulations, such as in shops and restaurants, then there was an expectation that Welsh Government would fund that additional workload accordingly.
- Members noted that £3.2 million had been allocated to the provision of a new Household Waste Recycling Centre in the north of Cardiff. Members asked what progress has been made towards finding a suitable site. The Assistant Director stated that a number of sites have been considered but none have been taken forward. Strategic Estates are currently reviewing potential sites.
- Member noted that the maximum amount charged for dog rehoming has increased to £500. Members asked what was the rationale for this increase. The Cabinet Member stated that he was proud of the record Cardiff Dogs Home has in rehoming dogs. The £500 figure was not charged for every dog and it was comparatively low when compared to dog rehoming charities. The Director stated that the figure charged varied depending on the age and the breed of the dog.
- Members asked what could residents expect to see for the funding allocated towards the bin sensors pilot and deep cleansing. The Assistant Director advised that bin sensors would be installed in bins in the larger 1100 litre bins that are provided in blocks or flats in order to provide data on how they are being used. Sensors have been used in public bins for some time and this has allowed increase efficiencies in the service, as the bins are monitored and are only emptied when they get to around 75% full. The resources for deep cleansing will be used not only to pick up litter but also to remove overgrowth and weeds and other detritus in a specified area in order to improve its appearance. The majority of the additional resource would go towards staff costs.

- Members sought assurances that resident who were bereaved due to covid-19 would not be adversely affected by an increase in bereavement charges next year. The Cabinet Member stated that funeral fees in Cardiff are extremely competitive and compare well to other core cities. The Director advised that the increase was the last in a three-year set of price increases. The bereavement service is an award-winning service and customer relations were at the core of it. The Director was not aware of any backlog due to increased demands on the service due to the pandemic.
- Members asked for details of the scale of support the service is receiving from volunteer groups and how reliant the service area was on volunteers in terms of the delivery of bags. The Assistant Director stated that the authority has bag delivery teams and this has been supplemented by volunteers. Hubs will reopen soon providing further outlets. In the longer-term the service will move towards using reusable bags.
- Members asked how many members of staff have been trained in enforcement and whether there has been an increase in enforcement as a result. The Assistant Director advised that there was traditionally separation between cleansing and enforcement staff. In future 'street scene officers' if waste has been incorrectly presented they will investigate and pass evidence onto colleagues in Enforcement. There will be 130 street scene officers and it was anticipated that there would be a marked improvement in rates of enforcement. Local Environmental Quality (LEQ) Teams would also be responsible for enforcement of dog fouling and littering.
- Members asked whether proposals to remove all single use plastics from Council venues has been subject to Equalities Impact Assessments. The Assistant Director stated that the proposal related to items such as single use coffee cups and stirrers etc. There were no proposals to remove items that are used for medical purposes.
- Members asked why the target for fly-tipping enforcement is lower next year than the current year. The fly-tipping reduction was in relation to the income generated. The figure for income from fines has been lowered to a more achievable level.
- Members asked whether the safety implications of street light dimming been considered. Members were advised that LED lighting are more controllable and can be adjusted in response to specific localised needs.
- Members referred to the 70% recycling target and the ambition for an 85% recycling strategy at HWRCs. Members asked how much of this is focussed on reuse, particularly in terms of glass recycling. The Assistant Director advised that 90% of the material currently collected at HRWCs that is sent for recycling is recycled. The city is currently recycling approximately 58% of its was. Recycling glass will increase performance and a pilot exercise has shown that glass recycling will be possible. Further changes to how recycling is presented are anticipated in order to reduce contamination. The Waste Strategy, which will address these issues, is anticipated later in the year.

- Members asked whether bids have been submitted for Welsh Government Circular Economy funding. Members were advised that the authority has received £2 million, plus an additional £369,000 to be allocated to projects that are already being delivered.
- Members asked why the increase in income from Lamby Way solar farm has been rated as 'red' risk. The Director stated that this relates to the overall implementation of the solar farm project.

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.

6 : WORK PROGRAMME 2020-2021

The Principal Scrutiny Officer presented future work programme options for Members consideration.

The Chairperson wished to record the Committee's sincere thanks for Richard Bowen's contribution toward the work of the Committee during his service with the Council.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

8 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 2 March 2021 at 4.30 pm via MS Teams.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified