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16<sup>th</sup> November 2020

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



Dear Councillor Michael,

### **Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020**

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 to discuss the item on 'Transforming Collections in Recycling Services'. The comments and observations made by Members on the areas relevant to your portfolio of responsibility are set out in this letter.

### **Transforming Collections in Recycling Services**

Members broadly welcome the proposals and believe that the revised collection schedule has the potential to significantly improve Cardiff's waste collection service. During the way forward they had a wider conversation about the suggested changes and agreed the following points:

- They thought that the introduction of compliance officers to monitor the work of the collection crews was a positive step forward. They felt that the new roles, alongside modern technology such as GPS tracking would give the Council better control of the work being carried out, which if done correctly could only enhance the waste collections.
- Several Members raised concerns about how the new four day working pattern would reduce the problem of missed collections, particularly in parts of North Cardiff which have collections on a Friday and might have to wait until the following Tuesday for a crew to pick up any missed waste. It was explained that waste collection crews would have greater ownership of the new rounds, and that compliance monitoring would help address the

problem. In addition to this they were told that the Council was looking at other options such as making transit vehicles available to pick up any missed collections. The Committee welcomed the response, but ask that you confirm in writing that measures will be put in place to ensure that missed collections are not left on the street over the weekend, and that all Cardiff streets receive parity of service.

- A Member explained that at times he had been left very frustrated by waste collection crews who simply ignored lone black bags on collection rounds when it was clear that they contained household waste that needed collecting. Ignoring the isolated black bags simply made residents angry, prompted Council or councillor complaints and resulted additional officers having to be sent out to collect the bags. He asked if going forward it would be possible to apply common sense, and ask the waste collection staff to pick up such bags. An officer explained that the Council was looking to move away from the red and white bag system in 2021, and would look to switch back to the black bag approach. He assured the Member that in future waste collection operatives would be asked to apply a common sense approach, and to pick up black bags where it was clear that rules were not broken. The Committee welcomed these comments, and ask for confirmation from you that such a common sense approach will be adopted going forward.
- A Member noted that the new collection rounds were bigger in terms of household numbers, and suggested that this would place pressure on areas where missed collections were already happening. Based on this comment the Committee has asked for details of the daily collection round numbers for all rounds and collection types across the city.
- Members commented that sickness levels were still very high across the Waste Management Service. They asked what the target sickness rate per person was across the service and were told that it was 14.8 days; it was explained that this target has yet to be achieved. In response to this discussion Committee Members have asked for:

- ❖ Confirmation of the current sickness absence target in writing, along with details of the current sickness rate being achieved by the Waste Management Service;
- ❖ Some Members felt that the sickness rate of 14.8 days was not ambitious enough, and that the Council should be targeting an even lower sickness rate. The Committee would like to know if you would consider setting a more challenging target, and if so, what more might be done to reduce the currently high sickness rate.
- ❖ The current sickness target is based on a five-day working week. Members would like to better understand how the new four-day working week will help to reduce sickness rates; if the sickness rate target will change following the introduction of four-day working; and how sickness will be measured across the new four day schedule.
- The Committee understands that the additional rest day each week might help waste collection operatives better recover after a working week, however, the flip side to this is that they will need to be working harder every day than they were before to ensure that all of the waste is collected. Members feel that the additional daily strain could place additional physical pressure on staff and result in injuries. I would be grateful if you could let the Committee know what measures have been put in place to manage the risk of an increase in injuries.
- Members welcome the earlier round finishes, and the removal of all waste from Cardiff's streets by 3:45pm. They feel that this should make a big contribution towards making our streets cleaner.
- Members welcome the idea of having a proper break in the middle of a shift, and feel that it will help the service move away from some of the challenges presented by the job and finish.

- The cover report for the item explained that the cost of the changes would be cost neutral. When questioned it was confirmed that the cost implications were slightly more complicated than stated in the report, with Members suggesting that it should have been pitched as an investment in Cardiff's waste service and not a cost neutral proposal. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with of all the actual cost changes associated with this proposal, and in doing so set these alongside the existing costings for providing the service.
- At the meeting the idea of aligning the street cleansing service alongside the revised waste collection scheme was discussed. It would be appreciated if you could confirm in writing if this alignment will take place, and if so, how it will be structured.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments and provide a response to the content of this letter.

Regards,



Councillor Ramesh Patel  
Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Matt Wakelam – Assistant Director, Street Scene
- Neil Hanratty – Director for Economic Development
- Davina Fiore - Director of Governance & Legal Services
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee