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4th March 2021

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



Dear Councillor Michael,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 2nd March 2021

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and the officers for attending the Committee meeting on Tuesday 2nd March 2021 to discuss the Cabinet response to the Environmental Scrutiny Committee report on 'Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff'. The comments and observations made by Members on the Cabinet response to this report are set out in this letter.

Managing Biodiversity & Natural Environment in Cardiff

Members were pleased with certain aspects of the Cabinet response, and were encouraged by the extra funding that was included in the recent budget proposals to support biodiversity and the One Planet Cardiff programme. They welcome your comments about the importance of dealing with climate change and supporting biodiversity, and agree that dealing with such challenges is not a choice but a necessity. When considering the Cabinet response in the way forward the Committee raised a number of questions, comments and observations. These are set out below:

- **Funding Update** – An officer provided a brief summary on recent funding that has become available to the Council for supporting biodiversity, and commented on other financial opportunities for similar work that may become available in future. The Committee was pleased to hear about support from the EnraW fund, and other potential monies to support projects like Coed Caerdydd. When replying to this letter it would be appreciated if you could provide Members with a detailed update on the

new and potential funding options, along with an explanation of how and where they will be applied.

- **Staff Capacity** – A Member explained that he was pleased to see additional capital funding being made available to support biodiversity and One Planet Cardiff related projects. However, he was a little concerned that the existing staff resource might not be sufficient to deliver the proposed new projects. With this in mind, the Committee is asking for assurance that the Council will make sure that staff resource does not become an afterthought, and that steps are taken to put the right people in place to help deliver these important projects.
- **River Rhymney Remediation Work** – During the meeting a Member asked for additional information about remediation work that is due to take place on the River Rhymney. Officers agreed to reply to this request in writing, so I would be grateful if you could include this information with the response to this letter.
- **Planning Policy Wales – Editions 10 & 11** – Several Members commented on the Cabinet response to Recommendation 8(c) that referred to the lack of detail in PPW10, and which they felt contributed to developers regularly overturning decisions on appeal. The recommendation went on to ask that these concerns were raised with Welsh Government, however, this idea was rejected because it was felt that Local Authorities had previously been provided with an opportunity to contribute to an all Wales consultation. An officer explained that the updated PPW11 had been published on the previous Wednesday, and that the Council had provided a consultation response to this new document. The Committee is keen to review this response, particularly as the new PPW11 has been put in place just in advance of the next Local Development Plan review. Members will construct a new work programme in June 2021 and will look to include an item on PPW11, this could include the Council's consultation response and the implications for Cardiff of this revised policy.

- **Rewilding & Member Consultation** – A Member thanked the Council for recent work that officers had carried out to support volunteer based biodiversity projects in his ward. He then went on to express some concerns about how the ward Member consultation had happened, and asked for clarification on the criteria used to identify suitable sites for rewilding projects. When replying to this letter I would be grateful if you could:

 - ❖ Provide assurance that ward Members will always be consulted on future rewilding schemes before any work is agreed;
 - ❖ Explain how this consultation process will work; and,
 - ❖ Provide details of any criteria used in identifying suitable sites for rewilding in Cardiff.

- **Declare Biodiversity & Climate Change Emergency** – Recommendation 1 of the report asked the Council to declare a biodiversity emergency alongside the existing climate change emergency. This recommendation was partially accepted, based on the idea that biodiversity challenges now sit under the wider umbrella of One Planet Cardiff. Members welcome the introduction of One Planet Cardiff, however, they are concerned that simply placing biodiversity as just one part of a wider programme means that there is a risk of overlooking the scale of the challenge and problem. The Committee ask that you revisit this recommendation and in future look to increase the prominence of this topic in key Council policy documents.

- **Local Development Plan Review** – The Committee note that the Council will start the review of Cardiff's Local Development Plan (LDP) in the summer of 2021. They look forward to providing scrutiny support on this important policy, and will work alongside the review process as it progresses. Members are keen to ensure that the revised document provides Cardiff with the best possible opportunity to enhance and support its natural environment. It would be appreciated if you ask officers from the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate to liaise with Scrutiny Services to help pull together the appropriate scrutiny arrangements.

Contract & Lease for Green Electricity Generation from Landfill Gas & Landfill Gas Management at Lamby Way

- At the meeting Members received a briefing note on the 'Contract & Lease for Green Electricity Generation from Landfill Gas & Landfill Gas Management at Lamby Way'. The Committee was disappointed that a better financial outcome could not be achieved, however, they acknowledge and note the challenges presented by existing contractual arrangements.

Requests for following this scrutiny:

- 1) **Funding Update** - To provide Members with a detailed update on the new and potential funding options for supporting biodiversity, along with an explanation of how and where they will be applied.
- 2) **Staff Capacity** – To provide assurance that the Council will make sure that staff resource does not become an afterthought, and that steps are taken to put the right people in place to help deliver the important biodiversity projects.
- 3) **River Rhymney Remediation Work** – To provide additional information about remediation work that is due to take place on the River Rhymney.
- 4) **Rewilding & Member Consultation** - Provide assurance that ward Members will always be consulted on future rewilding schemes before any work is agreed; explain how this consultation process will work; and provide details of any criteria used in identifying suitable sites for rewilding in Cardiff.

Recommendations to be monitored following this scrutiny:

- 1) **Declare Biodiversity & Climate Change Emergency** – To revisit this Recommendation 1 and in future look to increase the prominence of biodiversity and the natural environment in key Council policy documents.

- 2) **Local Development Plan Review** – To ask officers from the Planning, Transport & Environment Directorate to liaise with Scrutiny Services to help pull together the appropriate scrutiny arrangements for the Local Development Plan Review.

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:

- Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member Strategic Planning & Transport;
- Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure ;
- Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport & Environment;
- James Clemence, Head of Planning;
- Simon Gilbert, Operational Manager – Strategic Placemaking;
- Jon Maidment, Operational Manager – Parks & Harbour Authority;
- Nicola Hutchinson, Conservation Officer;
- Neil Hanratty, Director of Economic Development;
- Matt Wakelam, Assistant Director Street Scene;
- Davina Fiore, Director of Governance & Legal Services;
- Gary Jones, Head of Democratic Services;
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee.