

COUNCIL, 25 NOVEMBER 2021 : WRITTEN QUESTIONS

CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE (COUNCILLOR KEITH JONES)

W1	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR WOOD</u></p> <p>Following recent feedback from some residents who have struggled to navigating the planning portal to view and comment on an application, could more be done to simplify the portal interface?</p> <p>Also, can more prominence be given on planning notices to the alternative postal address and email for making objections or comments?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>I believe that your question relates to the Council's own online planning application database, rather than the 'Planning Portal' which is a nationwide facility for the submission of planning applications.</p> <p>The Council's online planning application database enables residents, businesses and other interested parties to view and track planning applications, as well as submit comments on current planning applications. The database is provided by an external software provider and cannot be altered; however, the Council will, in the near future, be progressing the installation of a new database, which will provide the opportunity to make the system more user-friendly.</p> <p>On occasion, where there have been known IT issues, we have extended the period for comments to be made via the database. It is also important to note that, unlike other Local Planning Authorities, Cardiff will accept comments that are submitted to the 'Development Management' mailbox beyond statutory timescales.</p> <p>With reference to Planning Site Notices, these are legal documents for which the wording and typeface has been agreed corporately; however, there may be opportunities to identify and highlight the relevant contact details in bold or a larger font size, and this will be investigated by officers.</p>
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CLEAN STREETS, RECYCLING AND ENVIRONMENT
(COUNCILLOR MICHAEL MICHAEL)

W2	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR SANDREY</u></p> <p>What is the logic behind HWRCs not accepting paper?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>Paper can be recycled using the green recycling bags, which are collected weekly from households, so we encourage people to use this service for recycling paper. As a result, there is limited demand for paper recycling facilities at our recycling centres. The space available at these sites is therefore prioritised for other recyclable materials – for example, rubble, wood, textiles, waste electrical & electronic equipment, batteries and media (books and CDs) – and, in particular, larger bulky items that cannot be recycled via the kerbside recycling service.</p>
W3	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR WOOD</u></p> <p>Disappointingly, visitors and residents increasingly observe that the streets of Cardiff appear to be dirtier (grime and litter) than most other cities in the UK, why is this?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>I would refute your assertion that the city’s streets ‘appear’ to be dirtier than other UK cities and question the factual basis for this.</p> <p>The Council applies a zero-tolerance policy to fly-tipping and street littering, which have a detrimental impact on the overall cleanliness of an area. Key performance indicators such as LEAMS (Local Environmental Audit and Management System) are used to help the service target resources where they are needed most. Current LEAMS data suggests that cleanliness is improving within the city, with 90.79% of streets being independently judged as of a high or acceptable level of cleanliness in 2018/19, rising to 94.38% in 2020/21, which shows sustained improvement across the city in the last three financial years.</p> <p>Cleansing Teams are working hard to maintain and improve the level of cleanliness across the city seven days a week. They have been recognised recently in the media for the great work they do to clean up the city following major events, such as the autumn series of international rugby matches at Principality Stadium.</p>

The Council also has the successful Love Where You Live campaign, which supports and facilitates community action. This has had a significantly positive effect on street cleanliness in a number of areas. Keeping Cardiff clean is not just the responsibility of the council, but each and every one of us who work, live, learn or play here.

For various reasons, including the pandemic, the volumes and types of litter on the streets can change over time. As such, cleansing rounds are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet the cities changing needs.

Officers are currently reviewing operations to ensure that resources are prioritised in line with demand – providing services in the right place, at the right time.

CULTURE AND LEISURE
(COUNCILLOR PETER BRADBURY)

W4

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR HOPKINS

When planting new trees or replacing diseased or fallen trees in residential streets, how does the council ensure that the species of tree used is appropriate for the location?

Reply

There are a range of technical factors that need to be considered, which affect the choice of tree species. The Council adopts the principle of ensuring that ‘the right tree is planted in the right place for the right reason’. This principle relies on the following primary factors when planning any new or replacement street tree planting:

- Good arboricultural understanding is essential when choosing new planting locations or replacing failed trees – the specific characteristics of the range of tree species available, including preferred soil conditions and moisture levels, growth form and size, including below ground rooting characteristics and any biodiversity value associated with the planting.
- An understanding of why a tree may have failed when considering the viability of replacement planting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate tree species need to be matched with the existing site conditions. Trees need adequate space to grow/mature into, so consideration of the ultimate space available is essential, avoiding built structures above and below ground, such as service runs including cables, pipes or other subterranean structures. • An adequate root development zone, ensuring that trees are sited to avoid any future impacts on vehicular or pedestrian movements, and any clear and foreseeable nuisance factors.
W5	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR SANDREY</u></p> <p>With the cancellation of the World's Biggest Panto which was due to come to Cardiff at the beginning of December, does the council anticipate any other festive events having to be cancelled?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>No, not at this time; however, you will appreciate that we are still within the grips of a global pandemic. As I made clear in my Council Statement last month, the support of the public and promoters in complying with current Covid safety measures in Wales, including use of the NHS Covid Pass where applicable, will be pivotal to keeping theatres and venues open and tours on the road.</p> <p>The World's Biggest Panto, the Wizard of Oz, was not due to have been held at one of our venues and the decision to cancel all the UK tour dates, not just the Cardiff date on 4th December 2021, was a matter for the tour promoter. I am pleased to say that support for all the Council's festive events has been encouraging and I have no reason to believe that any of them will need to be cancelled, unless there is a Welsh Government directive to do so as part of any new Covid regulations that may be implemented in Wales.</p> <p>Theatres and venues throughout the city have worked tirelessly to ensure that their venues are safe and, this year, Cardiff has a plethora of safe Christmas treats for residents and visitors to enjoy. These include the traditional Christmas pantomime at the New Theatre, the Christmas at Bute Park light trail, Winter Wonderland at Cardiff Castle and City Hall Lawn, Santa's Victorian Christmas at Cardiff Castle, as well as the annual Christmas Lights and Christmas Market, Santa's Grotto on Queen Street and the winter food offer on Working Street. FOR Cardiff is also providing a new light maze and projection attraction in St John's Gardens and a new Pixel Christmas Tree in Central Square.</p>

Attendance at these events and attractions will be the best gift that people can give to a sector that has been so severely impacted by the pandemic over the past 20 months.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS
(COUNCILLOR SARAH MERRY)

W6

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR HOPKINS

Can the council clarify the procedures involved when awarding contracts for school transport for pupils attending special schools?

Are all contracts subject to a tendering process?

How does the council ensure that contracted transport providers are fully insured and that all vehicles in use are suitable?

Reply

The Council has a Dynamic Purchasing Framework in place. Transport operators need to be an approved supplier on this framework to be able to tender for a number of Passenger Transport contracts, including School Transport. Contractors must pass a number of statutory requirements, including:

- possessing a PCV (Passenger-Carrying Vehicle) / PSV Public Service Vehicle (PSV) or taxi operator's licence for minibuses, coaches and buses;
- being accredited by a SSIP (Safety Schemes in Procurement) approved body, with approved health & safety policies and operational procedures; and
- having public and employee liability insurances and a financial status check.

Applicants then need to satisfy a quality threshold by providing evidence of the policies and procedures that they have in place and checks that they undertake. These include:

- vehicle breakdown/contingency plans;
- vehicle and driver safety checks;
- driving licence checks and policies;
- complaints procedures;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training provided (e.g. safeguarding, customer service, wheelchair clamping, equality awareness etc.); • carbon footprint, including how they reduce emissions in their fleet; • fleet lists and specifications – e.g. MOTs, vehicle servicing schedules and LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations) checks. <p>Once these checks are passed, transport operators can tender for specific lots/categories of contracts that they are approved for. Each contract also has individual specifications that they must then confirm that they can provide before they can submit a bid. The specification requirements are then checked on the award of the contract and during the contract.</p> <p>All contracts are allocated via the Council’s Proactis procurement portal. Contracts are advertised on this portal and all contractors registered and approved are alerted to individual contracts for the categories that they are approved to submit bids on.</p> <p>All vehicles have to have either a taxi licence plate or a PCV/PSV disc, depending on the category of vehicle being used or required by the contract and, in order to have these, they have to be appropriately mechanically checked, taxed and insured. These are checked by the Licensing Team issuing the taxi licence plate. Appropriate documentation is also required to be submitted before the contracts start, which is checked on an annual basis on the expiry of the documents or whenever the documentation is requested by the Passenger Transport or Licensing Teams.</p>
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INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
(COUNCILLOR RUSSELL GOODWAY)

W7	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR SANDREY</u></p> <p>Why was a display of electric vehicles allowed to take up a significant section of pedestrian space on Queen Street?</p>
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Reply

I presume that the Councillor is referring to the display of Ford Electric Vehicles which was staged a couple of weeks ago. The Councillor should be aware that the event occupied one of the Council's activation sites within the city centre, which are managed by the Council's City Centre Management Team. These locations are used for commercial marketing and event promotion purposes.

I can confirm that the area was assessed before, during and after the event and careful checks were made and conditions imposed regarding both emergency access and pedestrian flow. The display passed all these checks.

W8

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR MOLIK

As more and more businesses and organisations adapt hybrid models of work, what plans are in place for the many high rising office buildings in the city, many of which were struggling to be occupied pre-covid19 too?

Reply

The Councillor will be pleased to learn that demand for city centre business space remains high and the Council's Economic Development Team continues to deal with potential new investors with a requirement for office space.

The team is currently working on a number of projects with businesses to invest in city centre spaces, which includes a number of UK and regional HQ operations moving into previously unused office space. The team is also working to support investment into projects such as hotel development and repurposing some retail space for other leisure purposes. Working with Welsh Government, we will also be providing direct support for SMEs in the city to support business development opportunities over coming months.

It is also worth noting that, in pre-pandemic times, research regularly showed that Cardiff city centre was under served by Grade A office accommodation, which meant that the city has been less exposed to changes in the commercial office market when compared to other UK cities. Furthermore, research undertaken for our recovery strategy identified that city centres of the size of Cardiff can benefit from businesses seeking to develop and locate in cities that don't suffer from the cost and congestion issues of larger cities such as London.

LEADER
(COUNCILLOR HUW THOMAS)

W9

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR SANDREY

First Minister Mark Drakeford has said he is baffled by people who support First Past the Post. In light of this, will the leader reconsider his position on using STV for council elections?

Reply

My personal position has not changed and, in any event, any proposal to move to using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) voting system in future local elections is neither my decision nor that of the Cabinet, but one for Council to determine.

As you will be aware, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 makes provision for two systems for electing councillors of a principal council in polls at contested elections in Wales, which are a simple majority system (i.e. First Past The Post) and the STV system of proportional representation. The Act also states that the simple majority system under the local election rules apply, unless and until the council changes the voting system for the first time.

Before a principal council exercises its power to change its voting system, it must consult:

- (a) the persons entitled to vote as electors at a local government election in its area.
- (b) each community council in its area; and
- (c) such other persons as it considers appropriate.

In addition, a resolution to exercise the power is not passed unless the number of councillors voting in favour of it at a meeting of the Council is at least two-thirds of the total number of councillor seats on the Council.

A valid resolution to exercise the power to change the voting system may only be passed before 15 November of the year that is three years before the year in which the next ordinary election of the council is due to be held. Consequently, any future proposal to move to the STV voting system in the local elections in Cardiff in May 2027 would need to be consulted on, debated and approved ultimately by a supermajority of the Council by 15 November 2024.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
(COUNCILLOR CARO WILD)

W10	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR HUDSON</u></p> <p>Heath Ward has a more mature population demographic and parking of vehicles of some sort or other will be with us for some time to come. As this has a particular impact on our elderly, disabled or vulnerable residents, those who may not be able to walk, cycle or use public transport, but are still valuable members of society, can you commit to either putting in extra parking spaces or at least preserving those we have in Heath Ward, for the foreseeable future?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>Those sections of the highway in the Heath ward that are located closest to the University Hospital of Wales are already protected by resident parking schemes, which are usually installed in residential areas that show the greatest demand for daytime parking. I am also aware that most properties in the ward have the additional advantage of at least some off-street parking facilities, such as driveways, hardstanding, or garages, which would typically mean that new resident schemes would not be installed.</p> <p>We have been suggesting a wider area of residents parking for several years, but my understanding is that you have been opposed to the suggestions brought forward by officers. I will discuss the next steps with officers and, again, seek the views of ward members in agreeing a way forward.</p>
W11	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR WOOD</u></p> <p>Does the council intend to increase traffic enforcement in Gabalfa as a result of the new cycleway and proposed parking changes?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>A combination of parking enforcement officers on foot patrols and patrolling camera cars will be used to check for existing paper versions of resident parking permits and the new digital permits that are being introduced initially in Gabalfa. This dual method of enforcement will see officers enforce resident parking bays in the same way as they patrol and enforce pay & display parking areas by first checking vehicle windscreens to see if a paper permit is on display and then by checking the virtual permit list provided on their handheld devices for the street they are patrolling.</p>

The camera cars will support this enforcement by undertaking surveys of the resident parking areas and gathering data on where there are issues of non-compliance. The camera cars can cover more streets, more quickly and more regularly than officers on foot patrols; however, only parking enforcement officers on foot patrols have the power to issue any Penalty Charge Notices.

The area will be monitored regularly for compliance and any additional enforcement resources will be deployed as required. The data gathered from the camera car surveys will also be reviewed and used to help build up intelligence on where resources need to be specifically targeted.

Residents will still be able to report any parking enforcement issues via the Council's website and Connect to Cardiff (C2C).

W12

WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR WOOD

How have equality impact assessments for cycleways in the city addressed circumstances where pedestrians (who may have enhanced personal safety concerns or fears due to age or disability) are required to share space with cyclists or cross cycle paths to access bus stops or other amenities?

Reply

All cycleway schemes in the city are designed in accordance with the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 Design Guidance. They are also subject to Road Safety Audits, Equality Impact Assessments and consultation, with specific stakeholder engagement taking place with the Cardiff Access Focus Group. These stages help to inform any improvements that are made to the scheme designs and ensure that they provide the most suitable option for each location.

An example of this is the Central Square scheme on Wood Street where the bus stop island was designed originally in accordance with the Design Guidance. However, following consultation with the Cardiff Access Focus Group, officers developed an innovative and bespoke solution for a push button pedestrian crossing over the cycle lane – a first in the UK – which is being trialled at this location. The pedestrian crossing will be monitored in partnership with organisations such as RNIB and Guide Dogs, and will be installed in other locations in the city if successful.

	<p>Our policy is to provide more space for pedestrians, active travel, and bus travel. This is very much with the most vulnerable members of our community in mind, but we are also mindful that any changes to road layouts and movement patterns can cause real concern and take some time for people to get used to. We are really grateful to the various user groups who have been working closely with us to make these changes work for as many user groups as possible.</p>
W13	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR WOOD</u></p> <p>What powers or policies could the council employ to prevent the approval of new applications for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)?</p> <p><u>Reply</u></p> <p>Policy H5 (Sub-Division or Conversion of Residential Properties) of the Cardiff Local Development Plan 2006-2026, which was adopted by the Council in January 2016, states as follows:</p> <p><i>Proposals for any conversion to flats or Houses in Multiple Occupation will be permitted where:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>i. The property is of a size, whereby the layout, room sizes, range of facilities and external amenity space of the resulting property would ensure an adequate standard of residential amenity for future occupiers.</i> <i>ii. There would be no material harm to the amenity of existing, nearby residents by virtue of general disturbance, noise or overlooking.</i> <i>iii. The cumulative impact of such conversions will not adversely affect the amenity and/or character of the area.</i> <i>iv. Does not have an adverse effect on local parking provision.</i> <p>The Council also approved Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in October 2016. The SPG was subject to public consultation, which allows more 'weight' to be afforded to it. The SPG provides detailed guidance on how the Local Planning Authority will consider such applications.</p>
W14	<p><u>WRITTEN QUESTION FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR MOLIK</u></p> <p>When designing and implementing recent transport infrastructural changes in our city centre, what level of safety consideration was given to people with sight loss and disability getting off busses onto cycle lanes?</p>

Reply

I would refer you to the answer provided above in response to the similar Written Question (W11) from your political group colleague, Councillor Wood.