

Ref: RK/RP/MM/SE/11.11.2021

11th November 2021

Councillors Michael Michael and Susan Elsmore,
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.



Dear Cllr Michael and Cllr Elsmore,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 11 November 2021 – Local Air Quality Management – Cardiff Council Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2021

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee, I would like to thank you as well as Officers from the Planning, Transport and Environment Directorate for attending Committee on Thursday 11th November and providing the Committee with the opportunity to consider and discuss the Council's Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2021. Following our consideration, Members of the Committee have requested that I feed back the following observations, requests and recommendations to you.

Bus Retrofitting Programme

The Committee welcomed the reports regarding the Cardiff Bus Retrofit scheme confirming that all 36 buses would be on route by early in the new year 2022. It was further clarified by Officers that this included the installation of sufficient charging points for all 36 buses at the bus depot.

In relation to the routes that these retrofitted buses would be covering and how this had been prioritised, Officers confirmed that the two inner-city Air Quality Management Areas had been previously identified for this scheme. Members queried whether there should be further targeted routes towards the west of the City, particularly bus route areas around Ely, which have previously been identified as having an air quality issue. Officers at the meeting agreed to contact Cardiff Bus to clarify whether any of the retrofitted

buses would be utilised for any areas to the west of the City. Members **requested** to receive this information as soon as it was available.

Electric Vehicles

The Committee expressed concern over the longer-term impact in relation to the development of electric vehicle infrastructure given that, as reported by Cllr Michael, technology is rapidly changing, and the goalposts can often be moved. Members agreed that gradual and cautious steps needed to be taken in developing any infrastructure in this field to ensure it is fit for purpose and sustainable for the future.

Next Bike

The Committee questioned the success of the NextBike scheme and the recent suspension of the scheme in Cardiff due to vandalism and theft. Members queried whether there was any data to evidence its impact on car use which would indicate its level of success in Cardiff, or possibly even evidence of an increase in bus usage during the period of the scheme's suspension. Members requested that they consider this item as part of their future Work Programme to examine its success, particularly in light of the unfortunate vandalism, and what is planned to address this.

Pilot Project

The Committee welcomed the pilot to expand the air quality monitoring network with the introduction of 50 more Air Quality Monitors across the city. It was **recommended** that a number of these be assigned to areas outside schools where they have yet to put in place and Active Travel Plan. This will enable data to be gathered that can physically demonstrate the impact of the Active Travel Plan following its introduction and consequently provide clear evidence to inform future ways of working both for the schools and the Council.

The Committee queried whether there was any evidence to suggest that the school streets project which involved the temporary closure of road links surrounding a number of specific schools, had led to school related traffic

congestion simply being displaced to the areas just beyond these Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) zones. Officers said that they hadn't received any evidence of this, however they supported the Committee's **recommendation** for a few of the new air quality monitors to be placed outside of the identified TRO zones. The Committee highlighted that this would provide evidence to assist the Council to assess whether there is a real reduction in parents using cars to drop children off or whether it has simply relocated the problem to the streets just beyond the zone boundaries.

Levels of Air Pollution in Cardiff

In response to a query asking how Cardiff compared with other cities regarding air pollution Cllr Michael provided information resulting from a recent study from Natwest in conjunction with experts from the University of Southampton. This Green Cities Report looked at 25 of the biggest cities by population using 17 criteria in six categories: green space, energy use/production, motor vehicles, waste and recycling, commuting travel and pollution. Cllr Michael reported that this study had identified Cardiff as the third greenest city. The Committee agreed that this was a positive result for the Council and **requested** that they receive sight of this report as well as information on how Cardiff compares with the other 9 Core Cities in the Core Cities Group in relation to air pollution.

Castle Street Re-opening

During discussion around the re-opening of Castle Street, Officers advised the Committee that a detailed analysis had been undertaken of the resulting impact on air pollution and levels of NO₂ in the surrounding streets and roads around Castle Street due to traffic displacement from the road closure. Officers explained that this work had informed the decision regarding the re-opening of Castle Street. The Committee noted this and the response to the Chair's letter from their June meeting, where the same subject had been raised. Members **requested** that they receive a copy of this detailed analysis of the surrounding areas as at the time of their June meeting, this had not yet been completed.

TelRam Data

Following discussion during the meeting with Officers, the Committee **recommend** that the Directorate explore how Telraam data could be used to assist the Council in its data review on traffic and air pollution for locations such as Castle Street and its surrounding areas.

Post-Pandemic Air Quality Monitoring

In response to a query regarding the levels recorded at the non-automatic monitoring sites in Cardiff which monitor levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Officers reported that there are still similar results being seen as those in 2020. Members were advised that this can be attributed to the fact that there have still been some restrictions in place due to the pandemic and the data had not yet been received for October and November. The Committee agreed with Officers that it would be crucial to monitor the future levels in order to assess the real effectiveness of the Council's initiatives to reduce air pollution in the City following the longer-term recovery from the Covid pandemic.

Requests following this scrutiny

For ease of reference the requests contained in the letter are as follows:

- That clarification be sought from Cardiff Bus as to whether any bus routes to the west of the city had been prioritised for the retrofitted buses, particularly any in areas around Ely, which has previously been identified as having an air quality issue.
- That the Committee consider the 'Nextbike' scheme at a future meeting to examine its success, particularly in light of the unfortunate vandalism, and what is planned to address this.
- That the Committee receive sight of Natwest's Green Cities report developed in conjunction with experts from the University of Southampton, as well as information on how Cardiff compares with the other 9 Core Cities in the Core Cities Group in relation to air pollution.

- That the Committee receive the detailed analysis that was reported to have been undertaken, on the impact on air pollution and levels of NO2 in the surrounding streets and roads around Castle Street resulting from traffic displacement from the road closure during the pandemic.

Recommendations to be monitored following this scrutiny

To summarise, the Scrutiny Committees made three formal recommendations which are set out below. As part of the response to this letter we would be grateful if you could, for each recommendation, state whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet’s response. If the recommendation is accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Implementation Date
1. That a number of the new Air Quality Monitors introduced under the pilot, be assigned to areas outside schools where they have yet to put in place and Active Travel Plan. This will enable data to be gathered that can physically demonstrate the impact of the Active Travel Plan following its introduction and consequently provide clear evidence to inform future ways of working both for the schools and the Council.				
2. That a few of the new Air Quality Monitors, introduced under the pilot, be placed outside of the identified Traffic Regulation Order zones surrounding specific schools. This would provide evidence to assist the Council to assess whether there is a real reduction in parents using cars to drop children off or whether it has simply relocated the problem to the streets just beyond the zone boundaries.				

<p>3. That the Directorate explore how Telraam data could be used to assist the Council in its data review on traffic and air pollution for locations such as Castle Street and its surrounding areas.</p>				
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Regards,



Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member, Strategic Planning & Transport
- Andrew Gregory – Director for Planning, Transport & Environment
- Jason Bale - Programme Manager – Clean Air Cardiff
- Heather Warren, Cabinet Support Office
- Cabinet Support Office
- Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager
- Leaders of the Opposition
- Tim Gordon - Head of Communications & External Relations
- Members of Cardiff's Environmental Scrutiny Committee