

Ref: Scrutiny/Env/10/11/2022

Date: 16 November 2022

Councillor Dan De'Ath

Cabinet Member, Transport & Strategic Planning



Dear Councillor De'Ath

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 10 November 2022

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee a sincere thank you for attending Committee to facilitate our consideration of the Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report and the Cabinets response to the Replacement Local Development Plan Task & Finish Inquiry recommendations. Please also relay our thanks to the officers who attended the Committee meeting to support this item. Members agreed that I pass on the following observations. You will find our recommendations and requests, listed at the end of the letter.

Local Development Plan, 6th Annual Monitoring Report

General

It was noted that it appears that much of the report is regurgitated annually as very little appears to change year on year, including the assessment of the suite of indicators.

The committee felt that the assessment of all indicators in the report as green (continue monitoring) or yellow (further research) was somewhat disingenuous and that this did not represent the lived-in experience of councillors or of residents on the issues relating to their wards.

The committee felt that a review of the performance indicators would be useful as the current ones do not represent the most informative picture on the rollout of the current local development plan.

Members asked if the needs of older people, children's homes and other specialist housing needs are taken into consideration in the LDP. Officers confirmed that they work closely with Housing colleagues and the outcomes of the Local Housing Needs Assessment are used to inform the LDP.

Affordable Homes

Of particular concern was the completion of affordable dwellings which have consistently not met target year on year but remains yellow year after year. Should this indicate there is an issue, as the 'trigger' suggests i.e., *failure to deliver the required number of dwellings for each 2-year period?*

Despite the fact that the number of affordable housing completions is significantly below target, i.e., only 1,797 from a target of 6,646 (27%) of the total completions over since the beginning of the plan, and we are 60% through the life of the plan. This means that to meet the 6,646 target an additional 4,849 dwellings need to be built in the remaining four years of the plan. The committee asked why this was assessed as yellow? And consequently, where did officers expect to be in relation to this target at the end of the plan period? Officers remain optimistic that they will meet the targets of circa 24% of affordable dwellings on each site as there are targets of 30% for brownfield sites and 20% for greenfield sites. It was also noted that if the target is not met it will be rolled forward into the new replacement LDP. Officers also noted that private dwellings are usually the first to be completed on sites with the affordable housing being completed last, which could also account for numbers not currently meeting targets.

The committee asked for clarification regarding the definition of what makes a house 'affordable' as house prices have changed over the period of the plan. Officers confirmed that for the purposes of the plan the definition is from the latest Planning Policy Wales guidance which says *Affordable housing includes social rented housing owned by local authorities and RSLs and intermediate housing where prices or rents are above those of social rent but below market housing prices or rents.* It was also noted that student accommodation is not taken into account in these figures.

However, it was noted by members that private housing options are becoming more unaffordable, officers stated that the plan provides a variety of models to deliver affordable housing that include, for example, shared ownership schemes.

Energy efficiency

The committee asked, given the current cost of living and energy crises, what is in the current LDP to support the development of efficient buildings.

Officers indicated that when the plan was originally written in 2014 and that technology in relation to energy efficiency was not so well advanced, however, they also noted that there would be opportunities in developing the replacement LDP to include issues, such as 'quality' and 'green schemes'

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Members noted that although numerous supplementary planning guidance (SPG) documents have been approved by Council during the period of the plan, and that the indicators are rated as green, because there is an SPG that has been approved by Council, the effectiveness of these is not assessed in the report at all, and there is no information about the number of times the SPG has been taken into consideration during the planning process, and if they were, what the outcome of this was. It was acknowledged that SPG's have an important role to play in planning however some made need to be reviewed and expanded to make them more 'robust' going forward.

Bus Journey Times

The committee noted the poor performance in relation to bus journey times and reliability and asked how this might be further impacted following the introduction of 20 mph roads next year. Officers informed the committee that improvements would be aligned with priority/strategic bus routes across the city to mitigate any negative impact.

Physical Activity

The committee asked why the plan only contained an indicator in relation to adult physical activity and not children and young people. Officers informed

the committee that the indicator had been introduced by the Planning Inspectorate and they acknowledged that if adult physical activity is an indicator that the physical activity of children and young people could also be included. Officers were asked if they were concerned about the significant reduction in adult physical activity between 2016 and 2022 and the fact it has remained static for the last three reporting periods. Officers commented that the LDP was not responsible for this alone and that it can only protect existing activity spaces and provide new spaces.

Gypsy & Travellers

Members asked about plans for Gypsy and Traveller permanent and transit sites as they have been consistently assessed as yellow and it is unclear what action is being undertaken to progress the issues. Officers confirmed that following the most recent needs assessment approximately 100 new permanent sites are needed and a 10-pitch transit site. Talks are taking place on a regional basis in relation to site options to support the transit site with good access.

Cabinet response to the RLDP T&F Inquiry recommendations

The committee welcomed Cabinet's acceptance and partial acceptance of the recommendations made by the task and finish inquiry. In relation to the consultation that had been undertaken during the period of COVID restrictions members asked how the views and thoughts had of the digitally excluded been canvassed. Officers confirmed that a media campaign was undertaken at the beginning of the process and that the department has a large mailing list in relation to the LDP. They also confirmed that going forward they intended to carry out more face to face and drop-in sessions alongside any media and social media campaigns.

Officers were also asked if young people had been involved in the development of the user-friendly version of the report, they confirmed that links with the Youth Council had only recently been established.

For ease of reference, the requests detailed in this letter are:

- Clarification of where the Cabinet members and officers expect to be in relation to affordable housing and the specified targets by the end of the plan life
- Further details and the rationale for rating all indicators as green or yellow, as many indicators do not appear to be meeting their targets.

Please see below for the recommendations that the committee is making:

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Action Date
It is recommended that all indicators are reviewed prior to inclusion in the RLDP				
It is recommended that physical activity levels for children and young people are included as indicators in future plans				
It is recommended that the effectiveness of SPGs is assessed in future reports.				
It is recommended that the Youth Council is engaged to support the development of young people/user friendly documentation				
It is recommended that an early draft of future reports is made available to scrutiny				

Once again thank you once more for attending Committee and for considering our comments and recommendations.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Owen Jones', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Owen Jones

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc: Members of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Andrew Gregory, Director – Planning Transport & Environment

Simon Gilbert, Head of Planning

Stuart Williams, Group Leader Planning

Steve Parker/Kevin Morgan, Performance Leads

Chris Pyke, Audit Manager

Tim Gordon, Head of Communications and External Relations

Alison Taylor, Cabinet Support Officer