

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor Owen Jones(Chairperson)
Councillors Derbyshire, Gibson, Green, Lancaster, Lloyd Jones,
Jackie Parry, Proctor and Wood

17 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

18 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

19 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 July were approved as a correct record.

20 : RECYCLING STRATEGY FOR CARDIFF 2021-2025

Members were advised that this item provided Members with the opportunity to consider and provide comments on the new Recycling Strategy for Cardiff which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 28 September.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild (Cabinet Member for Climate Change) and Matt Wakelam (Assistant Director, Street Scene – Waste) to the meeting for this item.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Wild to make a statement during which he referred to the need for bold action to be taken in respect of Climate Change. The intention is to try and get some of the best recycling rates in the world and to certainly meet Welsh Government recycling rates which are at 70%; it is an ambitious target. The strategy has highlighted some issues, one being that there is further work to do in respect of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and flats – the targeting of these areas is not something which will be happening immediately; there will be a phased approach to this strategy as a whole. It is important that there is an awareness of what is being thrown away together with an awareness of how what is thrown away is recycled.

Matt Wakelam (Assistant Director, Street Scene – Waste) provided Members with a presentation which outlined the mission statement; the projects in the programme; the resource requirements; segregated recycling; the circular economy; and the current position.

The Chairperson invited Mrs Linda Gibbs, a member of the public, to give a statement. Mrs Gibbs, a resident of the Danescourt estate, expressed support for the Council's overall strategy but raised concerns about the implementation and evaluation of the pilot scheme for segregated recycling on the estate. She warned of

the danger of losing the goodwill of residents in regard to segregating their waste and suggested that more effective means of gathering residents' views could have been carried out.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Driscoll to make a statement as the Ward Councillor, in which he reiterated some of the concerns of Danescourt residents.

Members were invited to ask questions and make observations, which are summarised below:

Members asked whether the Council had enough segregated waste collection vehicles and whether there was a programme to acquire more. Officers advised that the procurement process for kerbside vehicles had commenced and was awaiting Cabinet approval before being set in motion. Sixty-four vehicles will be required and will be acquired in phases as segregation is rolled out on a ward basis.

Members raised residents' concerns about woven bags due to the contents being vulnerable to water damage and the bags being sprayed by cats. Officers advised that there were health and safety concerns around the use of caddies due to the risk of repetitive strain injury. Bags with waterproof vinyl coating which will also protect them from UV radiation are being investigated. Different styles of bag will be tested out during the roll-out.

Members discussed the cost of the new vehicles. Officers advised that the expense was approximately 2.5 times less than that of the current refuse collection vehicles because of differences in construction.

Members were advised that it was important that the design of the vehicles encouraged the behaviour change associated with segregated recycling.

Officers advised that efforts would be made to ensure the identifiability of bags using Braille tags or a similar device for the sake of partially sighted residents.

Members discussed the adverse reactions on the part of some residents to the limitation on residual waste collection and the prospect of a 3-weekly collection of residual waste. Officers advised that residual waste collections currently contain significant amounts of food waste and waste that could be recycled. Public messaging would be employed to increase the amount of waste recycled, particularly food. Welsh Government and WRAP state they have not seen a reduction in residual waste unless there is restriction in bin capacity to encourage movement of non-residual waste into appropriate collections.

Members sought clarification on whether there had been a reduction in the total amount of waste recycled by residents during the pilot. Officers advised that there was no marked change in the tonnage of recycled waste received.

Members discussed residents' concerns about storage of waste bags and caddies. Officers advised that there would be no increase in the amount of waste required to be stored at residents' properties. It was recognised that there are issues concerning storage in HMO's and flats and this may require further pilot studies. It is hoped that

over time storage would be a less pressing concern as manufacturers reduce materials used in packaging.

Members discussed the desirability of a dedicated advice team to support residents. Officers advised a team would be put in place to help areas and individuals that required support, using a phased approach. It was recognised that a significant amount of support might be required to assist vulnerable people. Workshops in Hubs would be used to engage people, and community champions would be recruited to spread positive messaging.

Members sought further information on plans to tackle the 40% of people who are resistant to recycling. Officers advised that the Council would educate and inform and that the final resort was enforcement. It is expected that 10% would always be resistant but the remaining 30% could be encouraged to recycle. The move away from green bags would help as people would be reluctant to contaminate their segregated recycling bags with unsuitable waste. Non-conforming areas and individuals would be targeted for education and enforcement.

Members enquired as to whether manufacturers were in place to take all the recycle. Officers advised that the Council was working with Welsh Government and other LAs to create hubs for recycling materials. Currently most material is sent to plants within the UK. The cost of transporting material has increased and provides an incentive for localising treatment. Conversations are ongoing with Welsh Government on encouraging processors to set up more locally.

Members sought further information on the Repair and Reuse Superstore. Officers advised there was a lack of a suitable repurpose and reuse facility in Cardiff. There was a large one in Manchester that was being examined. The key issue is ensuring a flow through of material to avoid a build-up within the facility. A business plan will be developed.

Members were interested in the timescale of the Superstore, potential revenue streams and whether there were any materials that could not be accepted at the facility and currently go to Lamby Way or Bessemer Close. Members were advised that more information would become available as the business plan was developed. There would be a consultation to encourage input of ideas. Other parties would be encouraged to become involved.

Members discussed recycling in schools and wished to know what was being done to further it. Officers advised that schools conducted their own programmes under the direction of their governing bodies. The Council is working with a 3rd party to provide skips for schools to collect textiles from parents, with part of the revenue returned to the school. Members considered that it would be helpful to share best practice between schools.

Members wondered why only 1 bag of each colour per household was being considered and how it was planned to accommodate the varying amounts of recycling across the year. Officers advised that there was no limit to the number of bags per household. At key times of the year special collections would be mounted to take in additional quantities of material.

Members wished to know what it was planned to do with the blue boxes used in the glass recycling pilot. Officers advised that glass boxes would be used as part of the segregated recycling scheme.

Members discussed recycling of plastic. Officers advised that Welsh Government was introducing an end user responsibility policy which could encourage recycling. Environmental problems are caused by irresponsible disposal of the material. Changes to legislation may be required to enhance enforcement. The view was expressed that a public information film by the Council might be desirable to tackle irresponsible disposal of plastic.

Members discussed whether reduction in consumption of materials and products would be included in communications and engagement with residents. Officers advised that consumer pressure was leading to manufacturers and retailers altering their practices to reduce the amount of material used in packaging. It is hard for the Council to drive change in this area apart from in its messaging. There is widespread misunderstanding about the carbon footprint of different materials. The Council will reduce numbers of single use plastic bags used by ending use of comingled recycling collection as part of its waste strategy.

Members enquired about the reasons behind the choice of areas for the segregated recycling pilot, and the high level of dissatisfaction revealed in responses, particularly regarding space for receptacles. Information was sought on whether there was best practice from other LA areas that could be investigated. Officers advised that the pilot areas were chosen on the basis of housing type and demographics. The Council is looking into extending the areas into other wards to gather more feedback. Initial responses to the Strategy were positive. Resistance to new practices was to be expected from some residents. The Council is looking into support for families in terraced properties, including smaller bags or bags that can hold more than one material. Properties without frontages or rear spaces are a particular concern. Solutions for HMOs are also being investigated.

Members discussed the problems raised by the random distribution of HMOs in communities. Officers advised that consideration was being given to the best solution for mixed streets. It is possible to deliver individualised collection but capacity and resource needs to be taken into account.

Members were advised that houses without frontages and HMOs have separate issues. Specific pilots in these areas may be required. It is important to facilitate recycling by all residents.

Members were advised that different types of bags were being investigated for robustness. A decision will have to be made based on balancing quality against cost. Some different varieties of bag will be piloted in the expansion areas.

Members enquired about the budget for the Strategy. Officers advised that there will be savings from ending comingling. Some costs will be supported by grants from Welsh Government. Effective messaging will reduce later costs associated with cleansing and enforcement. A phased rollout, partly caused by infrastructure issues, will facilitate communication and engagement as well as adaptation driven by experience.

Members expressed the view that communicating the benefits of segregated recycling in terms of reduced amounts of material being burnt was vital.

Members expressed their gratitude to officers for the work that has been done in developing the Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

21 : COASTAL RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Members were advised that this item provided Members with the opportunity to consider and provide comments on the report titled 'Coastal Risk Management Programme – Revised Procurement of a Construction Contract to Deliver the Coastal Defence Improvements' which is due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on the 22 September 2022.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Caro Wild (Cabinet Member for Climate Change) and Matt Wakelam (Assistant Director, Street Scene – Waste) to the meeting for this item.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Wild to make a statement during which he referred to the problem of rising sea levels and the necessity to ensure adequate protection.

Matt Wakelam (Assistant Director, Street Scene – Waste) provided Members with a presentation which provided an outline of the project and its purpose; funding arrangements; revisions to the scheme; the next steps; and risks to the Council.

Members were invited to ask questions and make observations, which are summarised below:

The Committee discussed the risks of a flood breaching the defences of Lamby Way landfill and enquired about measures to prevent it. Officers advised that the Directorate would continue to investigate ways to improve flood protection to the site despite its removal from the scheme. Inspections and an asset plan were being put in place. The rock-on would prevent the frag tip from falling into the sea.

Members were concerned about whether restricting protection to the west side of the Rumney estuary might increase the risk of erosion in other areas. Officers advised that the engineering to be used in the flood defences would mitigate the risk of increased erosion elsewhere.

Members enquired whether there was a 3D representation of the implications of a flood. Officers advised that the full business case would include a plan of the areas most at risk, and this could be shared with members.

Members asked how the Wales Coast Path would be affected by the scheme. Officers advised that some enhancements to the walkway would be made including

to its width and prevention of vehicle access, while retaining its character as a natural coastal path. There was no intention to make it into a cycleway or put down tarmac. There would be some temporary diversions of the path during engineering works.

Members were advised that willow latticing would form part of the soft engineering in the Rumney estuary.

Members enquired about steps to ensure the tender was attractive to potential bidders. Officers advised that the contract had been made as viable as possible for potential contractors. Allowance has been made for inflation to reduce risk for contractors.

Members were concerned about the possible impact of the current economic conditions on the programme and the short timescale for launching the programme. Officers advised that one of the previous tenders used local materials, which mitigated the risk from a weak pound but that here would be likely implications from rising fuel costs. They were further advised that whilst the timetable was tight officers were working hard to achieve it.

Members were concerned whether the forecasts of flood risk used in the report were still accurate as they had been made in 2016. Officers advised that the parameters for the design had been raised in 2018 from 20% to 40%.

Members enquired whether there were areas that were being considered for managed retreat.

The Committee were advised that the programme would take approximately 2-2.5 years to deliver following the award of contract.

Members considered whether the delays to the programme could have been avoided. Officers advised that there was a dedicated team for flood management which had been asked to take on the coast defence project although it was outside their remit. There had been protracted discussions around the marine licence and the construction plans. Regulatory reviews which were necessary to protect habitats had also taken time.

Members expressed their gratitude to officers for their work on the programme.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee to convey any comments, observations and recommendations made during the way forward.

22 : WORK PROGRAMME

Members were advised that this item provided the Committee with an opportunity to discuss and prioritise items for their work programme 2022-2023.

Members were content with the contents of the programme outlined.

23 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

Members extended their best wishes to Cllr Proctor who will shortly be going on maternity leave.

24 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chair agreed would be included in the letter(s) that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Officers.

25 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environmental Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for Thursday, 13 October 2022 at 4.00pm.

The meeting terminated at 6.25 pm