

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 NOVEMBER 2022

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

Shifa Shahzad and Charlotte Bowden

35 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

36 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

37 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2022 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

38 : LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a report providing an opportunity to endorse the 6th Local Development Plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) following its approval by Cabinet and submission to Welsh Government.

Members were advised that the LDP was adopted in January 2016. Annual monitoring reports are required to be submitted by 31 October each year. The topics noted by Cabinet were summarised in the report. These included Employment, Housing, Transportation, Gypsy and Traveller Sites, Supplementary Planning Guidance and contextual changes. The AMR concluded that good progress was being made against LDP objectives.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Dan De'Ath, Cabinet Member –Transport & Strategic Planning), Andrew Gregory (Director of Planning, Transport and Environment) and Stuart Williams (Operational Manager) to the meeting. The Cabinet Member was invited to make a statement which was followed by a brief presentation from the officers.

The Chairperson opened the debate on this item. Members were invited to seek clarification, comment or raise questions on the information provided. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on the classification of 'affordable housing' given that house prices have increased on average by 66% over the period of the LDP and, also, whether affordability was adjusted to take account of this rise. Officers stated that 'affordable housing' is defined by Planning Policy Wales as

houses in the social rented sector such as council houses and houses developed by housing associations that are offered to tenants at rents that are below the market value.

- Responding to a point made by a Member of the Committee, the Director stated that the Plas Dwr development is not yet complete. The masterplan for the development aims to deliver a sustainable community and it was therefore difficult to make an assessment on a scheme that is incomplete. The AMR suggests that the development is moving in the right direction. The masterplan provides for a full range of community facilities, including health, retail and SUDs drainage schemes.
- In terms of the larger housing developments, a Member considered that it was often difficult for ward members to identify who has responsibility for different aspects of those developments. The point was accepted and the Director asked that any particular difficulties be reported to officers directly.
- Members asked for an estimate of the likely number of new homes built by the end of the current LDP in 2026. Officers estimated that in the four remaining years of the current LDP the AMR has projected that there would be approximately 2000 housing completions each year.
- Members asked whether there was any opportunity to continue to press developers to improve the energy efficiency of their housing and match the achievements of the Council in their development in Rumney. Officers stated that the replacement LDP will offer a great opportunity to improve policy in terms of energy efficiency and to set targets for developers. The replacement LDP will aim to address a much broader range of issues in terms of quality, the environment and wellbeing. The powers that the authority has to require developers to build energy efficient stock is currently limited but the replacement LDP will require private sector developers to build to the highest standards.
- Members noted the 18 new SPGs that have been introduced during the period of the current LDP. Members asked how the effectiveness of the new SPGs is being monitored and assessed. Officers stated that SPGs are material considerations that need to be taken into account but they do not carry the same weight as the LDP. They are an important part of the framework but they are not binding. Officers accepted that some SPGs may need reviewing and the new LDP would offer an opportunity to fine tune them as part of a comprehensive review of the LDP. Members considered that it was essential to monitor the effectiveness of SPGs. Officers stated that SPGs are important documents that reinforce LDP policies. They play an important role and provide additional guidance. Appeal decisions are monitored to ensure SPGs are being implemented effectively.

- Officers were asked to comment on the effect the introduction of 20mph speed limits on roads in the city would have on bus journey times. The Director acknowledged the concerns of public transport providers. The authority is working closely with Cardiff Bus to ensure that improvements to the bus network are aligned with the strategic bus routes that Cardiff Bus wish to prioritise.
- Responding to a comment made regarding delays in housing completions, the Director stated that greenfield sites have taken longer than expected to become productive. However, there is lots of demand and completions are expected to increase over the next few years. The significant number of student accommodation developments did not count towards residential figures but there are now many more rented accommodation brownfield sites coming on stream and these will have a significant positive impact on housing completion figures.
- Members asked whether it was realistic to expect the target of 24% affordable homes to be achieved. The Director considered that the target was very achievable.
- Members asked what could be done to improve the energy efficiency of older properties in the city. Officers stated that they work closely with colleagues in housing on this issue. The replacement LDP will provide a focus on the provision of new homes for older people. The retrofitting of older properties falls outside the remit of the LDP.
- Members noted that 1,797 out of a target of 6,646 affordable homes (27%) has been built after 60% of the period of the LDP had elapsed. Members asked for further information as to why the completions were not higher at this stage. Members also asked whether the director was confident the overall target would be achieved as an additional 4,849 additional affordable homes would need to be completed in 4 years – 1,200 per year on average. Officers stated that completions have not been as high as anticipated due to the delays associated with the complexities in getting large strategic housing developments started, such as land assembly and planning consents. A large proportion of the affordable housing yet to be delivered would be delivered more quickly on those larger housing developments. Officers confirmed that the 'lag' referred to was not unique to Cardiff and that large developments across the UK will encounter similar issues.
- Members asked why the lower than anticipated number of affordable homes completed was rated 'yellow' in the AMR report and not rated 'red'. The Director stated that the rating reflected the number of affordable houses completed as a percentage of all completions.
- Members asked why children and young people were not included in the measure of adults participating in physical activity indicator in the report.

Officers stated that the indicators were set by the Planning Inspector. The point was accepted and this would be considered as part of the process for agreeing the new plan.

- Members noted that the number of adults participating in the recommended level of physical exercise had dropped 10%. Members asked officers to comment. The officers stated that there were a number of factors at play that were not necessarily associated with the LDP. However, the LDP does protect open space, provide for further open space and encourage active travel.
- Members commented on the 'green' and 'yellow' ratings in the AMR. Members considered that a number of these ratings were not in accord with the realities that Members are aware of within their wards. Members asked officers to comment on the performance indicators that are working and those that need to be changed to reflect the lived experiences of the citizens of Cardiff. Officers stated that a new suite of indicators would be brought forward as part of the replacement LDP. The existing indicators would be reviewed to ensure that they are more effective and responsive. The new indicators will reflect the policy approaches adopted as part of the new LDP. Officers accepted that point raised previously by the Committee regarding the monitoring of the effectiveness of SPGs.
- Members asked how much control could be built into the replacement LDP in terms of the types of development the Council would like to come forward in the City. Officers stated that the replacement LDP would need to deliver a range of choice in housing and a Local Market Housing Assessment will be undertaken. An overarching aim of the LDP is to cater for the needs of different demographics and different types of households. The authority would have more control over its own development but each planning application is judged on its merits. Other cities have zones in areas of the city to permit certain types of housing developments.
- Officers were asked to comment on the progress made regarding future provision of gypsy and traveller sites. Officer indicated that a needs assessment has been undertaken on the two types of sites required – transit and permanent. The assessment highlighted a need for 10 transit and 170 permanent pitches. Discussions are ongoing with other authorities in South East Wales regarding a transit site. Work is ongoing with Welsh Government regarding the provision of a permanent site. The Director stated that there was a complex set of needs in play and proposals would be brought forward in due course.
- Officers confirmed that the housing needs assessment includes provision for older people and care homes. The Cabinet Members stated that he is having discussion with his Cabinet colleagues regarding this and also the provision of childrens homes being factored into the LDP process.

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.

39 : CABINET RESPONSE TO RLDP SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

Members received a report providing the Cabinet's response to the Joint Task and Finish Group Inquiry on the Replacement LDP. The formal response to each of the six recommendations can be found in the appendix to the report.

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Strategy Planning was invited to make a brief statement. Members received a presentation on the findings of the Task and Finish Inquiry and the Cabinet Response. Five of the six recommendations were accepted. However, recommendation 1 was rejected.

The Chairperson opened the debate on this item. Members were invited to seek clarification, comment or raise questions on the information provided. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked how those members of the community who are digitally excluded were consulted with as many of those who are digitally excluded are also under represented. Officer stated that the consultation had taken place during the Covid-19 pandemic. The consultation was supported by a campaign in the local media. Letters were also sent to anybody who had registered on the mailing list. The Cabinet Member accepted the important point raised. However, moving forward the authority has undertaken to reach out to communities that do not normally engage in a more structured way.
- Officers were asked whether they would do anything differently in future consultation exercises of this sort. Officers stated that traditional drop in events would be held so that officers could meet with residents face to face. This was not possible during the lockdown period. This would be done in parallel with social media and virtual campaigns which had proven to be successful.
- Members asked whether children and young people would be involved in formulating the child-friendly version of the consultation document. Officers welcomed the suggestion and provided an undertaking that this would be done.

The Chairperson opened the debate on this item. Members were invited to seek clarification, comment or raise questions on the information provided. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

40 : DRAFT FORWARD WORK PLAN

Members were invited to suggest potential issues to be included in the future work programme. The Committee discussed a number of potential subjects.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

41 : COMMITTEE CORRESPONDENCE

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

42 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items.

43 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were advised that the next Environment Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for 8 December 2022.

44 : CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm