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17th May 2021

Councillors Huw Thomas, Michael Michael, Caro Wild.
County Hall,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff CF10 4UW.

Dear Leader, Councillor Michael & Councillor Wild,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee – 11 May 2021 – One Planet Cardiff –A Response to the Climate Emergency: Key Progress

On behalf of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee I would like to thank you and officers for attending Committee on Tuesday 11th May to discuss the One Planet Cardiff Progress Report. In a bid to assist you and the service area, Members of the Committee have requested that I feed back the following comments and observations to you.

Members firstly wish to acknowledge the level of corporate working of yourselves and officers in moving this agenda forward. As referenced at the meeting, Members look forward to receiving the definitive Report which is due later in the summer and will include comparisons between the strategy's key projects, along with a detailed action plan and findings of the carbon analysis assessment.

Cost of Retrofit on Social Housing

During the meeting, questions were raised on the costings of the council house retrofit programme and Members were advised that there is a specific budget of the council's Housing Revenue Account which is assigned to such work. However, as a specific figure was not provided it was unclear to Members the exact costings of the scheme. As such, Members would appreciate if specific detail on the costings could be provided along with insight into how the programme will be managed. During the discussion, the need to encourage higher income households into the agenda of retrofitting was also referenced as an ongoing piece of work and Members would appreciate some more information on the initiatives we are considering in engaging such households.

Wildlife corridors

With regard to wildlife corridors, although Committee Members note the comments made that extensive talks on all aspects of biodiversity does occur with developers, Committee Members do hold concerns that wildlife corridors have not necessarily always appeared to be recognised, maintained or enhanced in recent developments. Committee Members wish to stress the importance of public perception of the council in this respect and wish to seek evidence on how we as a council will ensure that wildlife corridors on future developments which occur in the city are better achieved in the future.

Tree planting

Committee acknowledge that the Council has planted over 10,000 trees and saplings in the last four years and would be intrigued to know exactly how many trees planted by the council have reached maturity. Committee wish to encourage the continuation of such activity, however do wish to stress that it is fundamental trees reach full maturity in order to provide their full benefits. Further to this, Members also wish to stress that within all future developments, areas are assigned for tree planting as not only will this help to ensure that the agenda of One Planet Cardiff is fully embedded, but it will

foster and drive a positive perception and message to the general public that the council recognises and values the importance of green open space. In addition, Committee Members would also be grateful to receive further information on the National Park City as offered by Cllr Wild.

Charging Points

With regard to the forecast of 40,000 charging points being required in Cardiff by 2030, Members hold concerns in this forecast being achieved effectively given the possibility of technology changing along with the other key variables highlighted by yourselves at the meeting. Members note this is a Welsh Government ambition and acknowledge and ratify your comments that a cautious approach in achieving this ambition is needed. Members do wish to stress that if such ambitions are included in the final strategy, or in any document produced by the council, it be clearly noted when ambitions or targets are set by outside bodies in order to ensure clarity to the readers.

Public Consultation

Members note the comments that the consultation reiterated the importance of facilitating a change in public behaviour and Members wish to seek feedback on if the recommendations made following our December meeting on public behaviour change have been accepted and will be acted upon. Members also wish to reiterate that a key purpose of a consultations is to act as a tool for learning which in turn can generate new ways of thinking and ensure the best possible outcome and delivery of such an important strategy. Members wish to note it was disappointing that this perspective on the purpose of a consultation appeared to not necessarily be shared.

Electric Taxis

Members note that cost remains a key challenge in the move toward electric taxis and Members acknowledge and felt assured by the comments made that that work is ongoing with outside bodies to develop trials and schemes towards addressing this challenge.

City Car Club

Members note the comments made on the research conducted by Hackney Council on the City Car Club and would welcome such information being shared with Committee. Members do hold concerns that a lot of the emphasis on transportation within the progress Report appears to be on cars. Members note the move to electric vehicles is a good solution, however wish to stress that electric cars are not the panacea and we as a council need to do more to discourage the public from using cars and this emphasis on a change in public mind-set could have been more greatly reflected within the report. Members wish to reiterate the need to more greatly emphasis public transport or other alternative modes of transport such as cycling or walking within all documents generated. Members feel the emphasis on public transport is particularly important in light of the pandemic and the general public perception on public transport safety. Members feel we as a council need to do more to rectify this perception and ensure members of the public are better informed that public transport is safe in the current climate and is the preferred mode of transport, which in turn will also assist with public transports financial viability.

Thank you once more to you and officers for attending the meeting. For ease of reference, the requests detailed in this letter are as follows:

PLEASE NOTE THE RESPONSES TO THE REQUESTS ARE BELOW IN GREEN TEXT

1. Costings on the retrofit of social housing along with insight into how such work will be managed.

The Housing Directorate has already insulated circa 150 blocks and thus has experience of managing such a scheme and a good understanding of the costs and timeframes involved. There are roughly 700 blocks yet to be upgraded and this will be a long programme of works delivered up to 2030.

It is anticipated that it will cost £6k to provide external wall insulation (EWI) to each flat and a further £3k for PV panels. Whilst EWI is physically possible on each block, PV installations can be subject to issues of tree shading and roof orientation. In summary PV may not be possible on every roof and this will obviously reduce the overall cost of the project.

If every block was to receive EWI then the cost of the whole project for the estimated 700 blocks would be in the region of £29m. If every block was to receive PV panels then this would add a further £18m. (The £18m included a provision to add PV to the 150 blocks that have already received EWI in previous schemes).

The project would be managed through the Directorates Planned Maintenance Team who have experience of such projects and contractor management. The work would be delivered via a framework that will ensure value for money and include additional community benefits such as local jobs and training.

Decarbonisation budgets of £20m have already been approved in the Housing Revenue Account 2021/22 budget setting process which will enable the first phases of this project to be delivered. The Directorate will seek to support the project with external funding as this becomes available and/or top up existing budgets should this becomes necessary.

2. How we are looking to engage higher income households into the agenda of retrofitting

We are still exploring a range of potential opportunities in this area and the work will form an integrated part of the wider domestic retrofit programme that will be formally instigated in the final OPC strategy. In the meantime, we are also working closely with the Cardiff City Region on this agenda as a holistic regional, or even National approach is likely to be needed. Initial proposals being tested include:

- i. a widespread publicity campaign targeted at home-owners which will point to the benefits of self-funded retrofit and provide signposting to appropriate advisory resources;
- ii. exploring how the Council, or city region, can provide a more direct service in retrofit using mechanisms like LA Flex which can connect existing industry funding (Energy Company Obligation funds, etc) with a wider range of home-owners;
- iii. exploring how the Council, or city region, could set standards or provide some other means of quality assurance on installers and suppliers to give home-owners greater confidence in choosing appropriate energy efficiency measures; and
- iv. setting out an appraisal of the wider benefits of an expanded retrofit sector, including in job creation, health and wellbeing benefits, and carbon reduction to justify requests for potential new funding mechanisms for retrofit.

3. How we as a Council will ensure that wildlife corridors on future developments are better achieved in the future.

Where an ecological impact assessment (EclA) of a proposed development is submitted to Cardiff Council, we expect it to conform to the EclA guidelines published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) in 2018. Those guidelines make it clear that an EclA, or Ecology Chapter in an Environmental Statement, should consider the impacts upon ecosystems, as well as habitats and species. Statements to this effect are found throughout the document, for example at sections 1.3, 1.9, 2.3, 4.1 and 4.8 etc. All EclA's, or ecology / biodiversity chapters of Environmental Statements, submitted to Cardiff Council should demonstrate how the impacts upon ecosystems have been assessed, in accordance with the 2018 EclA Guidelines. Any consideration of ecosystems in an EclA or ES should also consider the aspects of ecosystem resilience, including connectivity, as set out below.

Furthermore, in his letter to Heads of Planning of 23/10/19 the Chief Planner stated *'The attributes of ecosystem resilience (PPW para 6.4.9 refers) should be used to assess the current resilience of a site, and this must be maintained and enhanced post development. If this cannot be achieved, permission for the development should be refused.'* The attributes of resilience referred to here are the diversity, extent, condition and connectivity of these ecosystems.

The 'connectivity' aspect of ecosystem resilience which most closely equates to the need to maintain ecological corridors between habitats in and around development sites. However, the term 'corridor' implies a long, linear feature, whereas in reality ecological connectivity can take many forms, including ecological 'stepping stones' or broader habitat areas.

In separate legislation, Regulation 41 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires that policies relating to the development and use of land must include policies encouraging the management of features which, *'by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems of marking field boundaries) or their function as "stepping stones" (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.'*

This legislation is reflected in Local Development Plan policy EN6 'Ecological Networks and Features of Importance for Biodiversity', which states that *'Development will only be permitted if it does not cause unacceptable harm to :*

- i. Landscape features of importance for wild flora and fauna, including wildlife corridors and 'stepping stones' which enable the dispersal and functioning of protected and priority species;*
- ii. Networks of importance for landscape or nature conservation'*

Other LDP policies also make reference to the importance of ecological connectivity, such as the Green Infrastructure Policy KP16, and in fact we require that ecological connectivity or corridors are delivered via a comprehensive green infrastructure strategy for major development sites, which incorporates not just ecology and biodiversity, but also tree protection, parks and public open spaces, sustainable drainage and public rights of way.

By using this approach we secure the retention, creation and enhancement of green infrastructure corridors through all major developments.

4. How many trees planted by the council have reached maturity.

Technically, the age at which trees reach maturity will depend on the species of tree and the size the tree was planted. The Woodland Carbon Code requires planting to be in situ for a minimum of 25 years in order to provide the carbon capture benefits required, so we are using 25 years as a minimum age for a mature tree - trees that have been in the ground for 25 years will be counted as mature. Trees that are planted as 'semi mature' will take much longer to establish and begin to grow and capture carbon than if they are planted as small whips or saplings, so the 25 year 'rule' can apply for all sizes of tree.

On this basis, none of the 10,000 trees planted in the last 4 years will have reached maturity and we don't have accurate figures going back 25 years to calculate the failure rate for trees planted prior to 1997. The Coed Caerdydd programme will capture this data going forward.

It is recognised that development offers a significant opportunity to secure new tree planting. The impact of development on trees and its provision for new tree planting is assessed in accordance with our adopted policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance. New tree planting is important at all scales, from the smallest infill development to the largest strategic site. Key principles are typically agreed at outline and pre-application stage, with full details secure via reserved matters and discharge of condition applications. Key principles that are stressed from the outset include: -

- i. Securing space above and below ground for large, long-lived trees tolerant to the predicted impacts of climate change.
- ii. Ensuring tree planting is diverse in terms of species and form.
- iii. Maximising the biodiversity benefits afforded by tree planting.
- iv. Ensuring new trees will not be over-dominant and vulnerable to removal or unsuitable pruning.
- v. Ensuring there is a mixed age class structure of trees – i.e. not too many young, middle aged and old trees but a balanced mixture of all three wherever possible.
- vi. Ensuring that the characteristics of the site soil are assessed to ensure tree planting is suitable for the prevailing conditions.
- vii. Ensuring that tree planting and aftercare follows best practice in arboriculture.

5. To receive further information on the National Park City as offered by Cllr Wild.

Below are two links to the NPC Foundation and the NPC London web sites which will provide detailed information about National Park City status.

<https://www.nationalparkcity.org>

<https://www.nationalparkcity.london>

6. Feedback on if the public behaviour change recommendations made following our December meeting have been accepted and will be acted upon.

We are very grateful for the input of Environmental Scrutiny on this aspect of the work and fully recognise the need for ongoing dialogue and engagement on public behaviour change. This is reflected in para 10 of the May Cabinet report which notes that

“Public behaviour change is the biggest challenge in delivering the OPC Strategy and a section should be dedicated stating that the public has an essential role in this. A behaviour change plan needs to be well resourced, and continually in collaboration with partners, over the next 9 years, reviewed and evaluated by people with expertise.”

We are actively planning to make this public engagement exercise a key project in the final OPC strategy and an integral part of the wider action plan and delivery mechanisms being developed. We are currently in discussions with external consultants who are expert in this field and, subject to procurement, will be bringing them on board to advise on a fully worked, long term strategy for engagement with the public and other stakeholders in the city.

7. Sight of the research conducted by Hackney Council on City Car Clubs.

The London Councils Car Club Action Plan states that *‘a shift to the use of car clubs from private car use has led to an increase in the use of public transport, taxis, walking and cycling.*

The full action plan can be found here

<https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/download/file/fid/15211>

The Council is preparing a Bus Strategy to emphasise the importance of public transport. The Council is also working with the Welsh Government, Transport for Wales, Cardiff City Region and Bus Operators on reforming the bus network through the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES2) as reported to Cabinet in January 2021. Further reports will follow as plans emerge through the working groups and consultation will be undertaken on the plans at the appropriate time to ensure there is wider input to their development. The Council is also working with the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales on future enhancements to the Metro and the promotion of public transport associated with the recovery plans.

Furthermore, the Council is working with Welsh Government, bus operators and the Confederation of Passenger transport (CPT) to ensure that social distancing on public transport is adhered to. In addition, operators are continuing to use enhanced cleaning such as overnight anti-viral fogging and in service cleaning of handrails, seat backs etc. on vehicles to ensure that they are as safe as possible.

Regards,

Councillor Ramesh Patel

Chairperson Environmental Scrutiny Committee

Cc:

- Paul Orders – Chief Executive
- Andrew Gregory – Director for Planning, Transport & Environment
- Gareth Harcombe – Operational Manager – Energy & Sustainability
- Jason Bale - Programme Manager – Clean Air Cardiff
- Members of Cardiff’s Environmental Scrutiny Committee