

ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present: Councillor Patel(Chairperson)
Councillors Derbyshire, Owen Jones, Lancaster, Jackie Parry,
Parkhill, Owen, Sandrey and Wong

1 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

2 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2020 were approved by the Committee as a correct record.

4 : PLANNING, TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE - COVID UPDATE - SERVICE AREAS & CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report providing Members with an opportunity to consider the current position of the Planning, Transport and Environment Directorate and the impacts that the Covid-19 pandemic has had upon service delivery and capital projects.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment, Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning Transport and Environment and a number of officers from the senior management team in the directorate.

After brief statements from the Cabinet Member the Director was invited to deliver a presentation and comment on the impact of the crisis. The presentation focussed on the following areas:

- Budget
- Performance Objectives
- Main Challenges
- Capital Programme
- Future opportunities

The Chairperson invited the Committee to comment, raise questions or seek clarification on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members asked for further details of the impact the pandemic was having on the dogs home. Members were advised that the dogs home responded to the

pandemic by putting its business continuity plan in place. This included placing 25 dogs with foster homes for the duration of the pandemic – 20 of which have stayed with the foster homes. The service is operational now. New volunteers have been induced and dog walkers are now received via an appointment system.

- Officers were asked to comment on the authority's response to the recent proliferation of 'e-scooters' in the City. Officers advised that request have been received for Cardiff to become a pilot area for 'e-scooters'. Pilots are taking place in other city and guidance is expected as a result of those in terms of how e-scooters are managed.
- Members whether the pandemic has changed the authority's approach in terms of planning, transportation and air quality in the City. The authority is engaging with major employers in the City in terms of their return to work requirements and commuting. There are significant implications for the City Centre. The City Centre is a key asset and we need to ensure that we support business, retail and key infrastructure in the City Centre.
- A Member asked officers to identify which plans or service delivery areas have the highest cause for concern. The Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment stated that each project mentioned in the presentation has been thoroughly assessed and is deliverable. Officers indicated that the main areas of concerns are those projects aligned with the City Centre. Information on the development of a programme of works for highways improvements would be shared.
- Members asked whether the authority would promote flexible working practices as one of the largest employers in the City. Officers stated that the authority's approach to flexible working for its staff would be a matter another service area.
- Members asked whether the authority and Welsh Government have accepted that the Metro project, as designed, may not affect the workflow movements of the future. The Director stated that it was not accepted that the City will fundamentally change in terms of the importance of the City Centre and the Bay. The Metro will provide the long-term rapid-transit system that will support underpin movements in the City and it is being reinforced by Welsh Government in terms of discussions around the M4 and the alternative arrangements that may be required as a result of the M4 Commission.
- Members asked officers to explain the budget variance of zero in the presentation. The Director stated that the service area is predicted to achieve a balanced budget. Some support from Welsh Government has been received from the parking reserve. The service area is seeking to mitigate any gap in funding.
- Officers were asked to state what the advantages and disadvantages of the pandemic have been. The main change has been learning how to use technology to work from home and broadly remote working has been shown to work. It was accepted that some office working is necessary. Senior officers listed a number of advantages and disadvantages in their service areas.
- Members asked for an update regarding the completion of schemes of works to carriageway. Officers indicated that in terms of volume in square metres the schemes delivered were as expected.
- Officers were asked to provide an indication of the proportion of spending allocated to covid schemes that came from the budget and overall cost of the schemes. The Director stated that the capital cost of the schemes was met by Welsh Government.

- A members asked for comments on the consultation given to the Castle Street closure scheme, particularly in terms of access to Cardiff Central railway station. The Director stated all key facilities were still accessible including Cardiff Central railway station. There is ongoing consultation with service providers, including Cardiff Bus and other bus companies to ensure that services were continuing.
- It was noted that Bereavement Services were working at 99% capacity. Members asked whether officers were confident that the service could respond to an anticipated increased rates of death during the winter months. Officers stated that service times were reduced and services were held on Saturdays at the peak of the pandemic. Service times could be reduced further or later into the evenings or on Sundays if required.
- Members asked whether Castle Street would reopen. The Director stated that the closure is temporary for 18 months. A report on the outcome of the closure would be taken to Cabinet in the future with an update in terms of the outcomes of the closure and its impact on businesses, the view to options for a permanent proposals which would need substantial consultation.
- A Member asked whether the Castle Street scheme has displaced traffic into neighbouring wards. The Director stated that there is no evidence to suggest that any significant displacement has occurred. The position would continue to be monitored. The Chairperson asked whether there was any data of traffic movements in the inner city wards prior to and during the pandemic in terms of displacement. Officers stated that traffic signal data has been used. There is no data to suggest significant displacement has occurred.
- Members noted public transport use has fallen. Members asked what the authority was doing to encourage a return to public transport. Officers stated that the key point was to ensure bus company survival. The authority is working with Welsh Government to protect bus companies from a fall in passenger numbers. Passenger numbers are now increasing. The authority is also providing support with school transport.
- Members noted that the increase in footfall in Castle Street coincided with the launch of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.
- Members asked for additional detail on how the school bike fleets would work in practice, particularly in terms of the lack of secure bike parking. Members were advised that 30 schools are participating in the scheme with approximately 30 wishing to join the scheme. The fleet will be held in containers on school sites. Secure cycle parking will be provided in new build schools.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson write on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Member conveying their observations.

5 : ENVIRONMENTAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

RESOLVED – That the Principal Scrutiny Officer with support from Members of the Committee draft an additional section in the report highlighting the impact of scrutiny during 2018/19. The revised would be considered at October meeting of the Committee for approval prior to the Annual Report 2019/20 be approved for submission to Council.

6 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

7 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

The meeting terminated at 6.00 pm