

COUNCIL: 23 MARCH 2017

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Visit of the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK

I met with Her Excellency Mrs Natalia Galibarenko, the Ukrainian Ambassador to the UK, on 27 January 2017 in advance of the Wales Holocaust Memorial Day Service. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss a number of matters with the Ambassador, including the role of 'Smart Cities' in leading national economies through the use of new technologies and a zero carbon approach to sustainable development. There are potential opportunities for the City of Cardiff Council to share its knowledge with local government in Ukraine on issues such as urban regeneration and waste management. I am also committed to reconnecting Cardiff's historic links with the city of Luhansk in partnership with Cardiff University.

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

I attended the signing of the £1.2 billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal on St David's Day, 1 March 2017, at Cardiff Airport. The leaders of the 10 local authorities within the Cardiff Capital Region signed the City Deal document following agreement by each of the 10 councils involved (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan). The signing also means that the Cardiff Capital Region Joint Cabinet of the 10 Council leaders has ceased to operate in shadow and met formally in public for the first time on 17 March 2017.

The City Deal has now entered into a transition phase and a transition plan will be developed that will detail key activity to be undertaken, including the establishment of a regional office to support the delivery of the Joint Cabinet's future work programme. The transition phase will also see the creation and development of three advisory bodies to the Joint Cabinet – the Cardiff Capital Region Economic Growth Partnership, Employment & Skills Board and Regional Transport Authority.

Local Shopping Centre Regeneration

Earlier this month, I visited the Wentloog Road shopping area in Rumney to see for myself the improvements that have been made there as part of the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes programme. These include the provision of new paving, bollards, cycle stands and litter bins. A wider parking bay and new zebra pedestrian crossing have also been provided following the removal of a former road narrowing. In addition, the road has been resurfaced and a new tree has been planted on the street.

These improvements aim to make the shopping parade a better, safer and more attractive place for shoppers, traders and residents, as well as for children walking to/from the nearby primary school and people accessing local community facilities. The improvements have been welcomed by both traders and shoppers.

Great Western Cities

On 21 March 2017, I met with the Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, and Councillor Debbie Wilcox, the Leader of Newport City Council to discuss and agree the next steps for the Great Western Cities partnership. We agreed that this is an important and complimentary partnership to our respective city regional arrangements, City Deals and Devolution Deals. The partnership is also crucial in improving connectivity between our three cities, making the most of the renewable energy potential of the Severn Estuary and in collaborating on place marketing and investment in markets, like China, where no one city has the scale to make an impact by themselves.

We agreed to develop a forward work programme to progress these issues, including commissioning research to look at the feasibility of reducing rail journey times between Cardiff and Bristol to 30 minutes, down from around 50 minutes at present. We also discussed the opportunities arising from the Great Western Cities' involvement in the UK and Chinese Governments' developing work on linking city-clusters. This initiative would see us working alongside colleagues from Government and the other UK city clusters such as the 'Northern Powerhouse' and the 'Midlands Engine'.

Cardiff Public Services Board

I chaired a meeting of the Cardiff Public Services Board on 21 March 2017, which approved the Local Well-being Assessment, for which the Cardiff Liveable City Report acts as an Executive Summary. This is a statutory requirement for Public Services Boards under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Cardiff Public Services Board also approved a report for publication, entitled 'Brexit – Implications for Cardiff'. The report sets out the implications and challenges for public services and other organisations in the city following the UK's decision to leave the European Union and a number of recommendations to support local communities, protect the Cardiff economy and safeguard public services. Copies of the report have been circulated to Members for information.

Cardiff Commitment

The Cardiff Commitment seeks to ensure that all young people in the city are supported to secure a job or progress into further education or training by connecting young people, schools and wider educational institutions with business and employers. By working in partnership, the Council is seeking to create a coalition for change that can make a real difference to young people's lives whilst supporting the city's economy. The Cardiff Public Services Board endorsed the Cardiff Commitment at its meeting on 21 March 2017 and will support the Council in further strengthening and launching the Cardiff Commitment.

Living Wage City

I recently wrote to all business ratepayers in Cardiff to make them aware of the support on offer from the Council for becoming a 'Living Wage' employer. There are an increasing number of employers in Cardiff who recognise the benefits to their business of paying the 'real' Living Wage, over and above the mandatory National Living Wage set by the UK Government. The City of Cardiff Council became the first 'Living Wage' Council in Wales back in 2012 and is also an accredited Living Wage employer.

Any business that is interested in becoming a Living Wage employer should contact the Council's Commissioning & Procurement Team (e-mail: procurement@cardiff.gov.uk) for further information on the Living Wage and the financial assistance that is available from the Council in 2017/18 to local businesses seeking accreditation that employ up to 250 staff.

Councillor Phil Bale
Leader of the City Council
22 March 2017