

COUNCIL: 29 JUNE 2017

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

AGENDA ITEM: 7

Cardiff; Capital Ambition

At its first formal meeting on Thursday 6 July 2017, the Cabinet will consider the “Capital Ambition”, the administration’s policy programme for the next five years.

Cardiff has been reinvented over the past quarter of a century. The 2017 UEFA Champions League Final underlined the extent to which Cardiff is now positioned as a recognised European Capital City, while the city’s growth and the growing strength of the city economy, point towards a period of success for Cardiff.

The proceeds of Cardiff’s growth over recent decades have not, however, been felt by all of the city’s residents. The gap between the most and least prosperous communities in Cardiff is substantial and growing. Similarly, while Cardiff’s population growth is a sign of strength for the city, unless it is well-planned and managed carefully, it will put strain on the city’s physical and social infrastructures, damaging the city’s productivity, its quality of life and the quality of its public services. These challenges must be met over a period of unprecedented financial austerity for the Council and its public service partners.

The ‘Capital Ambition’ document sets out a programme of action for addressing these challenges; of growth, inequality and sustainability. It sets out four priority areas of action:

- **Working for Cardiff** – Making sure that all citizens can contribute to, and benefit from, the city’s success.
- **Working for Wales** – Leading a capital city that creates opportunities for the people of Wales.
- **Working for the Future** – Managing the city’s growth in a sustainable way.
- **Working for Public Services** – Making sure public services are delivered efficiently, effectively and sustainably in the face of financial pressures and escalating demand.

Following the Cabinet meeting, the ‘Capital Ambition’ document will be launched at an event hosted by Cardiff and Vale College at their City Centre Campus to which all elected members are cordially invited. The administration looks forward to working with all partners to deliver this ambitious agenda for Cardiff over the next five years.

Fire Safety in Council Housing Blocks

Everyone will have been shocked and saddened by the recent tragic fire that occurred at Grenfell Tower in London. Our thoughts go out to all those affected.

The administration is concerned to ensure that appropriate safety measures are in place in similar blocks in Cardiff. There are 9 Council operated high rise blocks in the city. All blocks have a robust risk assessment in place and these are checked every 6 months by qualified assessors from the Council's own compliance team. Each flat is built to be fire proof and to contain any fire, allowing the tenant to stay safe inside – if their flat is not directly affected. Each flat is fitted with a fire door and mains wired smoke detector, which is regularly tested.

The communal areas of each block are kept clear of any combustible material and are checked daily by caretakers trained in fire awareness. High risk areas such as bin stores and chutes have sprinklers. The Fire & Rescue Service regularly carry out practice exercises in our blocks and they have access to a water supply on every floor.

Initial tests of Council blocks, which have been undertaken by external consultants, have shown that none of our blocks have cladding similar to that used in Grenfell Tower. Whilst there have been previous incidents of fires in our high rise flats, I am very pleased to say that all have remained contained and have not spread. However, as an administration, we will not be complacent and tenant safety is of utmost importance to us.

As a result, a full review is being carried out to ensure that the Council is meeting all the latest best practice in fire safety and to identify any other action which could be taken to further minimise any risk to our tenants.

Eastern Bay Link

The first phase of the new £57million Eastern Bay Link Road was opened officially on 15 June 2017 by the First Minister of Wales, Rt. Hon Carwyn Jones AM. The dual carriageway has been named Ffordd Ewart Parkinson after the late city engineer and planner, Ewart Parkinson, who was instrumental in planning the regeneration of Cardiff.

The new link road will improve transport links to Cardiff Bay; ease congestion in the city centre; reduce journey times for businesses and commuters and help to reduce traffic and disruption in the local community of Splott. The construction of the road provided 13 apprenticeships, 2 work experience placements and jobs for 9 graduates and 27 people who were previously long-term unemployed.

The Council looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Welsh Government to progress the next phase of the Eastern Bay Link and Cabinet Members will be making representations to Welsh Ministers about further improvements to the city's transport infrastructure.

Cardiff Business Awards 2017

The third annual Cardiff Business Awards ceremony was held on Friday 23 June 2017; an event which is rapidly becoming one of the most prestigious business award ceremonies in Wales. The contribution of businesses to the success of the city was rightly recognised, with the talent and ambitions of businesses from across a range of sectors being acknowledged.

Cardiff now ranks among the most competitive of the UK Core Cities on a number of fronts. Business growth rate is faster than the UK average, employment growth rate is the fastest of all the Core Cities and the city has one of the fastest growing populations in the UK. All this has been built on the bedrock of a strong relationship between the Council and private, public and voluntary sector partners. I spoke at the event and underlined the administration's commitment to ensuring that this continues in partnership with the business community. I also made clear that County Hall will be open for businesses to discuss the city's future, their investment plans and hear their ideas on how the city's economic performance could be further improved.

Closure of Tesco Contact Centre

The recent announcement that Tesco is to close its contact centre at Maes-y-coed Road in the Heath Ward with the loss of over 1,000 jobs has significant implications for the city's economy. The Council has written to the Chief Executive of the company to outline our deep concerns and has also met recently with Tesco representatives to make representations on behalf of Cardiff. Given the huge number of jobs that will be lost, in addition to the job losses announced by Barclays in Llanishen a few months ago, we have asked officers to work with partners to develop a programme to look at how we can promote the rich pool of skilled workers who will be looking for alternative employment.

UEFA Champions League Final 2017

The UEFA Champions League Final was played in Cardiff on 3 June 2017 and, once again, Cardiff demonstrated its credentials as a front ranking European city by successfully hosting one of the world's biggest sporting events. It was the largest sporting event in the world in 2017, with a live television audience of 200 million and broadcasted to 200 countries across the world with a global reach of 1.3bn people. I would like to, once again, thank everyone involved in making the event such a success. It has provided an unprecedented legacy for the Welsh Capital and has firmly established the city on the world stage. Cardiff also benefited from the highest footfall of people recorded in Cardiff since records began with over 314,000 people visiting the capital to soak up the atmosphere.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
28 June 2017