

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: NRS/RM/PB/04.06.15

Dyddiad / Date: 16 July 2015



Councillor Phil Bale  
Leader, City of Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Atlantic Wharf  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Bale

## **ECONOMY AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 JUNE 2015**

Thank you for attending the June meeting of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee, where we considered the Economic Development Directorate Delivery Plan, the Great Western Cities Partnership and the Cabinet Response to this Committee's Cardiff Central Market and Historic Arcades Inquiry. I will be grateful if you could also pass on the thanks of the Committee to Neil Hanratty, Ken Poole, Charles Coats and Jonathan Day for their presentations and for addressing the questions arising during the meeting. The Committee had a few comments and observations following the meeting, which are set out below.

### **Economic Development Directorate Delivery Plan**

Members of the Committee are in agreement with the point of view given during the meeting, that despite the Celtic Manor pushing ahead with its conference centre, there is room for another facility of this kind in Cardiff. We feel the range of hotel provision the city has to offer will help secure usage of such a facility, and we also recognise the intention for this facility to be a multipurpose arena, holding sports and music events, as opposed to a dedicated conference centre. The Committee would be interested in receiving an item on this development when the plans are more tangible, and request this is arranged with the Principal Scrutiny Officer for this committee.

During the meeting, Members tested the rationale for the review of Cardiff Business Council. We were informed that the Council funding for this organisation expires in March 2016, and as such it is a good time for a review take place. Additionally we heard that as arrangements for a City Deal progress, Cardiff Business Council was to be tested to see if it was the best organisation, or best structure to demonstrate to the UK Government that businesses will be enabled to play a leading role in the area. We agree Cardiff Business Council needs to be financially sustainable and able to

deliver for businesses as regional plans develop. Members request the results and way forward are presented to the Committee upon completion of the review.

The Committee wrote to you in April with comments regarding the changes to the Tourist Information Centre, and we wish to reemphasise the points made following discussions at this meeting. You are clearly well aware that the city centre needs to have a dedicated tourist information point and we are confident there are a range of good options coming forward, such as within the Welsh Language Centre or as part of developments at Central Square, and we look forward to reviewing the proposals as they come forward.

Members wish to note the comments made with regard to the City Deal proposals and the ongoing negotiations with surrounding local authorities. At the meeting you stated you were hopeful that all nine surrounding local authorities would give their support to the Cardiff City Deal, with Cabinet reports going through the relevant processes within each Council. We look forward to seeing whether your efforts to outline the benefits of the City Deal are successful and hope the backing of all our neighbouring authorities is received.

In discussing this item, and during the later agenda item on the Great Western Cities Partnership, the importance of transport within Cardiff and connectivity with other cities was emphasised to the Members. Members heard that transport, and the ease of travel within a city are one of the key factors to making it attractive for investors. The Committee is mindful that Cardiff is pushing ahead with a number of developments aimed at boosting the local economy, such as the Central Square and Cardiff Enterprise Zone, and feels it is vital that transport improvements in and around the city are prioritised alongside these.

### **Cabinet Response – Cardiff Central Market and Historic Arcades Inquiry**

Members of the Committee are pleased the work we have undertaken through this inquiry has been valued and taken on board by the Cabinet Member and Officers, with all but one of our recommendations being accepted or partially accepted.

The Committee particularly welcomes the efforts that have been made to improve relations with market tenants and their representative groups. Members are conscious that much of the improvement needed for the market will need to be undertaken with the cooperation and support of its tenants, and it is therefore imperative that any historic disputes or tensions do not hinder any progress or improvement plans agreed for Cardiff Central Market, as was outlined in our report to Cabinet.

The Committee is keen to monitor the progress made in relation to all the accepted recommendations from our inquiry. As we look to set out 2015/16 work programme in

the coming weeks, please could you advise us an appropriate time to schedule a comprehensive update and to scrutinise the vision or improvement plan that has been developed for the Market? Members are keen to see a timeline in relation to the Market, outlining the changes and improvements we can expect to see and when they are due to be complete.

In relation to the vision and aspirations for Cardiff Central Market, the Committee feels the Council needs to be ambitious, setting high targets and looking to bring the market up to the standard of those found in major cities across Europe. Officers at the meeting outlined how great an asset the market is, describing it as iconic and as having a lot of potential as a tourist attraction. We expect to see improvement plans developed that recognise and look to exploit these characteristics.

During the meeting Members were informed the market already offers a diverse range of products and stalls, with 50 different types of product offered across the 63 stalls. We do however question the quality and diversity of what is offered within the market, and feel this could in fact serve as a barrier to developing a high quality tourist attraction. In our experiences when visiting markets abroad, the range of products sold at stalls is fascinating and of a high quality, and we feel at present the offer of Cardiff market does not reach these standards.

### **Great Western Cities Partnership**

Members of the Committee welcomed the comprehensive overview you provided at the meeting and we note the commitment and enthusiasm you demonstrated to the Great Western Cities Partnership. We recognise that this partnership is a good offer for the City of Cardiff and that the benefits that can stem from such a partnership with the cities of Bristol and Newport merit the efforts being invested by yourself and officers.

The Committee wishes to note a need for caution because there may be conflicting interests and a need to split resources between the Great Western Cities Partnership and the Cardiff City Region, particularly as both initiatives could be competing for government funding at the same time. During the meeting you addressed these concerns and we are reassured that you are aware of this potential conflict. We note that during the meeting you commented that the City Region is the primary focus, with the Great Western Cities partnership sitting alongside.

The Committee is conscious there will always be potential for tensions when working on projects across a number of local of authorities or indeed with cities across the border. In working on the City Region and Great Western Cities partnership, Cardiff will be working with both the Welsh and UK Governments and we feel there may well be conflicting interests to be balanced. It is our hope that as plans progress, the understanding of how they can coexist and how each can provide benefits for the

surrounding areas will become clearer. Again, we are reassured you are aware of the potential conflicts and finely balanced relationships that will need to be maintained, and hope that commitment to these projects produces tangible benefits for Cardiff.

During the presentation given at the meeting, you made reference to a report identifying that the potential negative impact for Cardiff from HS2 is around £60m. Please could you provide us with any analysis that has been undertaken into this figure, or indeed share the report which identified this negative impact? Members of the Committee are also interested to know how other cities, such as Bristol, are potentially going to be impacted according to this report, and whether this has been a catalyst for their willingness to work in partnership with authorities in South East Wales.

To re-cap for ease, the Committee asks that the following points are addressed:

- an item be arranged with the Principal Scrutiny Officer to consider the proposals for a multipurpose arena when they are more tangible.
- an item be arranged with the Principal Scrutiny Officer to consider the results of the Cardiff Business Council review and the plans for the way forward.
- an item be arranged with the Principal Scrutiny Officer to consider the longer term proposals for a Tourist Information Centre in the city centre.
- an indication be given of an appropriate time to schedule a comprehensive update on Cardiff Central Market.
- provide the report and analysis on the potential negative impact from HS2 for both Cardiff and other cities such as Bristol.

I would be grateful if you would consider the above comments, observations and recommendations, and look forward to receiving your feedback.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod McKerlich', with a horizontal line underneath it.

**Councillor Rod McKerlich**  
**Chairperson, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee**

cc Neil Hanratty – Director of Economic Development  
Cabinet Support Office  
Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee.