
FINANCE, MODERNISATION & PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

Living Wage Week 2023

Despite inflation easing, new research shows that the cost-of-living crisis is far from over for Britain's 3.5m low-paid workers. Polling of over 2,000 workers earning less than the real Living Wage found that levels of financial hardship remained high and well above pre-cost-of-living-crisis figures. The findings revealed that amongst low-paid workers over the past 12 months:

- 50% say they are worse off than a year ago.
- 39% regularly skipped meals for financial reasons.
- 39% had fallen behind with household bills.
- A third (32%) had been unable to heat their homes due to financial reasons.
- Over a quarter (27%) had fallen behind on their rent or mortgage payments.
- Over a fifth (21%) took out a payday loan to cover just their essentials.

It's clear that paying the real Living Wage is more important than ever as the cost-of-living-crisis continues to impact the most on those on low pay. That's why the Council will again be playing a major role in helping to celebrate Living Wage Week this year, which starts on 6 November 2023. The new real Living Wage rates for 2023/24 will be announced two weeks before on 24 October.

There are now over 210 accredited Living Wage employers in Cardiff, and over 76,000 people work for an accredited employer, of whom over 14,000 employees have received a pay rise to the real Living Wage. This has put an additional £65 million into the Cardiff economy.

The Cardiff Living Wage City Partnership is currently working to promote accreditation by GP and dentist practices as these businesses play a vital role within all our communities. I would like to ask all Members to encourage GPs and dentists in their wards to consider accreditation. All the information about the real Living Wage that organisations require is available at: www.livingwage.wales

The main Cardiff Living Wage City event will take place on 10 November at an event hosted by the Cardiff Business School and Living Wage Wales/Cynnal Cymru. The event will be focused on Cardiff businesses and will see Cardiff Business School talk through the findings of the recent Employer Benefits report, with a focus on Cardiff.

On 8 November, I will also be participating in a panel discussion at the Institute of Government & Public Policy Conference at the Royal Society of Medicine in London. I will join colleagues from across the UK to discuss the topic of *“From The Living Wage And Local Collaboration To Digital Innovation And Inclusion: Creating The Right Conditions For People To Thrive”*. This will provide a great opportunity for me to set out our partnership approach and achievements to date in Cardiff.

Ardal Procurement Partnership

Ardal is the new name for the procurement service run by Cardiff Council. As well as delivering the collaborative partnership with Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan Councils, the service will continue to manage the award-winning South-East Wales regional frameworks. Ardal will seek to champion socially responsible procurement by striving to maximise the positive economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being impact across our partnership and our frameworks. More information on Ardal can be found at: <https://ardal-procurement.gov.wales/>

All four Councils within the Ardal partnership are committed to targeting resources smartly to deliver excellent value for money in all that they do and by working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, public sector partners and the private sector for the benefit of their communities and residents. The four Councils currently spend over £1bn per year procuring goods, works and services. This presents a significant opportunity to use our purchasing power to help achieve the strategic objectives of the four Councils involved and the wider region.

Anti-Slavery Day 2023

Cardiff Castle glowed red to mark the annual UK Anti-Slavery Day on 18 October 2023. Illuminating one of the city’s most iconic buildings helped shine a light on the issue of modern slavery and human trafficking. Anti-Slavery Day provides an opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery, and to encourage government, local authorities, companies, charities and individuals to do what they can to address the problem.

The Council is committed to ensuring modern slavery and human trafficking have no place in its business and supply chains. The Council’s annual Modern Slavery Statement was published in Spring 2023, while council officers have also supported Monmouthshire and Torfaen Councils to formulate and publish their first Modern Slavery Statements.

There were 536 potential victims of trafficking in Wales last year, an increase from 479 in 2021. 58 of these referrals were made by Cardiff Council. Maintaining the number of referrals of potential victims of trafficking has been achieved in Cardiff due to increased provision of awareness training to practitioners. A range of bilingual resources, including mandatory training, are also available to raise awareness of modern slavery and help staff understand their duties for safeguarding vulnerable people.

Digital & Customer Services

CardiffGov Mobile App

Last month, the CardiffGov mobile app was downloaded over 2,000 times, around 800 times more than the monthly average. Since its launch, the app has been downloaded 82,796 times. Changes made to the app in September covered adjustments to the drug littering reporting process, improvements to the usability of the app and general bug fixes and updates.

The Digital Delivery team has worked with colleagues from Waste Management to make sure that information displayed on the App and website has been correct and up-to-date for residents during the current period of industrial action. The next service to be developed digitally will be bin and bag requests to Waste Management. Development work to improve information for residents is underway and this will provide accurate information on what residents are able to collect (specific to their property) and what stock each stockist holds.

Website

During September, 314,000 people visited www.cardiff.gov.uk viewing 707,000 pages. 78.3% of visitors used a mobile device to access the site, the highest percentage to date. The Council's website also scored 98% in the September audit by SOCITM's accessibility partner Silktide. This puts www.cardiff.gov.uk in joint second place against all other local authorities in Wales and 25th in the UK following a review of over 375 websites.

Chatbot (BOBi)

There was a total of 8,833 conversations in September via BOBi, the Council's chatbot, with 859 resulting in a handoff to C2C agents. Chatbot users mostly engaged with the scenarios provided for waste options, Council Tax and parking enquiries. Of the 613 users who left feedback, 81% rated their experience as ok, good or very good, with 45% rating it as very good.

The Digital Delivery team has finished changes to content for waste scenarios, including bulky items, garden waste, waste bins and bags, and recycling centre changes due to the industrial action. There have also been content changes to schools' information, taxi complaints, flooding, fines and libraries. BOBi has also been released onto two new areas of the website and now covers libraries and housing information. Engagement with the Election Services team has also resulted in new content for customers in relation to elections and voting information.

There has been great progress on the development of the 'Where is my nearest...?' function to locate services closest to a customer's given address. The team is liaising with App and web developers to ensure cross-functionality with our other digital channels.

Connect to Cardiff

Last month, Connect to Cardiff (C2C) handled 23,796 phone calls, 3,351 emails and 1,687 webchats with citizens. 7,802 messages were also received via a combination of the Council's Social Media platforms, with C2C actioning 7,751 and referring the remainder to the relevant officers within the Communications Team. C2C agents also provided 738 direct replies. The top five reasons for contacting the Council were the impact of the industrial action on waste collections; the new 20mph speed limit in Wales; and enquiries relating to Planning, Schools and Parks.

Councillor Chris Weaver
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance
20 October 2023