

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: NRS/CW/PBr/15.02.16

Dyddiad / Date: 17 February 2016



Councillor Peter Bradbury
Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-operatives & Social Enterprise
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Bradbury

ECONOMY AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 FEBRUARY 2016

Draft Corporate Plan 2016 – 2018 and Budget Proposals 2016/17 Community Development, Co-operatives & Social Enterprise Portfolio

Thank you for attending Committee to present your Portfolio's draft Corporate Plan and Budget proposals that fall within this Committee's terms of reference. I will be grateful if you could also pass on the thanks of Committee to Sarah McGill, Neil Hanratty and Andrew Gregory for their presentations and for addressing the questions raised during the meeting.

This letter contains the recommendations, observations and requests for information agreed by Members which we hope will be of assistance to you in shaping the final budget recommendations that you will be making for your Portfolio on 18 February 2016. This letter has been split into three sections as your Cabinet Portfolio contains services within the Economic Development, Communities, Housing and Customer Services, and City Operations Directorates.

Economic Development Directorate

Following the release of the Budget Proposals 2016/17 – for Consultation in December 2015 it became apparent that the proposed cuts to various arts and cultural schemes supported by the Council would be subject to significant public and media interest. We are pleased to see that the majority of these proposals have been removed from the Budget Proposals 2016/17 published on 12 February 2016, and wish to commend you on the manner in which these proposals have been handled – there was potential for these proposals to overshadow the 2016/17 budget setting and to damage the reputation of Cardiff, and we are pleased that the favourable settlement from the Welsh Government has allowed this situation to be averted.

As mentioned in our letter following the January Committee meeting, we welcome your commitment to hearing first-hand the views of stakeholders and groups affected by the proposed savings from arts and culture, and we are pleased that the Cabinet has demonstrated it has listened to the public views expressed in the consultation responses and local media reporting.

The Members of the Committee welcomed the clarifications you gave with regard to the £430,000 saving to be achieved through a review delivery in Arts Venues (namely St David's Hall and the New Theatre). We were pleased to be informed that the future of these venues and the Arts Active programme are not under threat, but rather are subject to an ongoing procurement exercise to secure alternative management arrangements. At the meeting we were informed that these venues current receive a subsidy in the region of £2million, and the savings identified here are a conservative estimate of the anticipated reduction in this subsidy.

This Committee is conscious that the cultural offer of this city is vitally important in terms of its 'liveability', contributing to top businesses, visitors and students choosing the Cardiff as their destination of choice and contributing to the wellbeing and quality of life for residents and visitors. We are pleased that this has been recognised by the Cabinet in removing the proposed savings in question. Through the process of the Budget consultation over the past few months it has become clear to the Committee that there is a vast, active and passionate arts community within Cardiff. We hope that the conversations initiated as part of the consultation can be built upon, establishing genuine relationships between the Council and arts community in the city.

A point we touched upon in our letter following the January meeting, which we wish to reiterate, is the recognition that there are potential crossovers where benefits can be delivered through art other areas of the council, such as within social services, education and city regeneration. We wish to recommend that this is an area for discussion to be included on the agenda of the next Cultural Conversation meeting – identifying services delivered by the Council that could benefit from the expertise and creativity found in the arts community. I am conscious that the Leader, Cllr Bale has a leading role in the Cultural Conversation, and have requested that he receive a copy of this letter.

City Operations Directorate

On the whole, the Committee is content with the City Operations Directorate savings proposals from your portfolio put forward within the Budget Proposals 2016/17, and the aspirations set out within the Corporate Plan. We do however wish to make a few comments with regard to the Alternative Delivery for Leisure procurement exercise. You will be aware that this Committee has been following this procurement exercise for some time, receiving updates with our consideration of quarterly performance and having undertaken prior task and finish inquiry work. We accept that delays have

been experienced as a result of legally binding rules and regulations, culminating in the savings identified for 2015/16 not being achieved, but we feel strongly that this cannot be repeated in 2016/17. With £850,000 savings identified from this procurement exercise, the Council cannot afford for such a substantial amount not being delivered in the upcoming financial year.

During the meeting Members questioned the Leisure Centres Invest to Save Bid listed within the Capital Programme. We were informed that £4million will be allocated over the next three years to undertake priority works on the Councils leisure centre buildings, with repayment being achieved through increased footfall at the facilities. Members of the Committee are left questioning the logic behind substantial investment in facilities that may soon be operated by alternative service providers, and question the fact that this has been accepted as an Invest to Save scheme as opposed an alternative form of Capital scheme. We do however recognise that these facilities remain assets of the Council regardless of the outcome of the procurement exercise and accept that Council financing of these improvements will remove an element of risk that may discourage bidders.

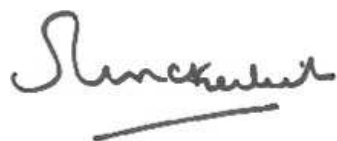
Members wish to note that during the meeting we were informed that there will be no closures of leisure centres in Cardiff and that no play centre will be closed until an alternative facility is confirmed, subject to ward member agreement.

Communities, Housing and Customer Services Directorate

Members wish to note their satisfaction in the manner in which the Hub Strategy has been delivered over recent years, and welcome the continued rollout of this approach within the 2016/17 budget. We recognise that a clear strategy and vision for Community Hubs was developed and driven through over recent years. While we recognise there are differences between this process and the procurement exercises being undertaken for leisure and arts venues, we question whether the Alternative Delivery Model projects have been overly cautious, or lacked the strategic vision at the outset that is clearly evident through the delivery of the Hubs Strategy.

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

Regards,



Councillor Rod McKerlich
Chairperson, Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee

cc Sarah McGill – Director, Communities, Housing and Customer Services
Neil Hanratty – Director, Economic Development
Andrew Gregory – Director, City Operations
Christine Salter – Section 151 Officer
Leader, Cllr Phil Bale
Cabinet Support Office
Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Nigel Howells, Chair of Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny
Committee