

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

Dyddiad / Date: 17 February 2016

Councillor Graham Hinchey
Cabinet Member: Corporate Services and Performance
City of Cardiff Council
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 4UW.



Dear Councillor Hinchey

ECONOMY AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 FEBRUARY 2016

Draft Corporate Plan 2016 – 2018 and Budget Proposals 2016/17

Thank you for attending Committee to present us with an overview of the Draft Corporate Plan 2016 – 2018 and Budget proposals 2016/17. I will be grateful if you could also pass on the thanks of Committee to Christine Salter, Ian Allwood and Edward Janes who attended the meeting and provided clarification on all our questions.

The Committee had a few observations following the meeting, mainly with regard to the *Changes for Cardiff* consultation, which are outlined below. Discussions also took place around the level of capital borrowing the Council is undertaking, the confidence in the achievability of savings and the timing of the initial budgetary proposals in December 2015. Members welcomed the answers provided during the meeting and do not wish to follow up on these points any further.

With regard to the *Changes for Cardiff* consultation, we wish to note our congratulations on to the level of response received, which we were informed was one of the highest of comparable consultations undertaken by local authorities across the UK. We do however note that the total number of responses is approximately 800 fewer than was received for the 2015/16 consultation.

Members of the Committee are concerned with the relatively low levels of participation seen in the Cardiff East and City and Cardiff South Neighbourhood Areas, particularly when compared to the level of response received from Cardiff North. We fear these disparities could skew the results toward the preferences of individuals from a higher socio economic background, and not accurately reflect the whole demographic of Cardiff. We appreciate that efforts are being made to increase participation in the Southern Arc of the city, but wish to recommend that a weighting mechanism is introduced in future years, in an attempt to make the results more

representative of the people of Cardiff. We fear that currently the views of individuals in the Southern Arc of the city are underrepresented.

Members appreciate that there is a fine balance to be struck in relation to the length of the consultation and the wording used within the questions. If overly long and complicated, response rates will fall, but if overly simplistic the validity of the questions and results can be diluted. We feel that some of the wording within this years consultation document is quite vague, calling into question the usefulness of the results. For example, question 3 of the consultation document asked people whether they would support the Council charging more for some services – however there is no indication in the scale of the price increase, and no doubt there would be very different results to varied levels of price increase, or indeed for each different service that may be subject to price increases. This is one of a number of examples we could cite, and recommend that future budget consultation questionnaires are robustly validated by an outside organisation.

The Committee requests clarification on the process used in developing the consultation document, and more specifically the terminology used within it. Some Members of the Committee participated in consultation events and found themselves explaining the meaning of the 'jargon' used in order for members of the public to complete the survey. We question the process used for proof reading the consultation document and recommend that in future years a sample group of the public, or external organisation, is asked to assist in proofing the document, ensuring the document is accessible and not filled with needless technical terminology,

The Committee will write separately to each Cabinet Member whose portfolio falls under the terms of reference of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee, highlighting the budgetary and operations issues that were discussed during the meeting. We include for your information in this letter the points made in relation to budgetary issues, given your overarching role on the Budget and Corporate Plan.

Members of the Committee are pleased to note that a number of proposals in relation to Arts and Culture in Cardiff have been removed from the budget proposals to be taken to Cabinet on Thursday 18 February. We see this as a clear signal that the Cabinet has listened to the feedback received in the consultation process, to the points raised following our January Committee meeting and to the petitions that have been prevalent in the local media. We welcome this responsiveness from Cllr Bradbury, Cabinet Member: Community Development, Co-operatives & Social Enterprise, and are pleased that the favourable settlement from the Welsh Government has been used to respond to public opinion.

The Committee questions the inclusion of a £4million Invest to Save Bid for Leisure Centres within the Capital Programme. While we recognise the need for priority works to be undertaken at some facilities, we question whether increased footfall and

increased income as a result of this work is the basis of a genuine Invest to Save scheme.

The Committee is conscious that substantial savings are proposed through securing alternative delivery models (ADM) for services. In the case of this committee we are concerned with the ADM for Leisure Centres and the ADM for Arts and Cultural Venues – procurement exercises that were identified and accepted within the 2015/16 Budget. However we are aware that there has been a failure to deliver the identified level of savings in 2015/16, and we wish to stress the importance of these savings being delivered in 2016/17.

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 Christine Salter – Section 151 Officer
Cabinet Office
Members of the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Nigel Howells, Chair of Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny
Committee