

COUNCIL: 25 OCTOBER 2018

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Budget 2019/20 – Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

Earlier this month, Welsh Government published its draft budget plans for 2019/20. These indicated a reduction in core funding for Local Government next year. As was confirmed subsequently in the Provisional Settlement published on 9th October 2018, the reduction in funding to local authorities in Wales will, on average, equate to a 0.3% reduction on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year, although some authorities will see decreases of as much as 1%.

Cardiff's provisional settlement of +0.4% is the most favourable in Wales, but it is still a real-term reduction. The additional £1.7 million cash that this will provide next year doesn't even begin to cover the significant financial pressures that were identified in the Council's Budget Strategy, and there is still a challenging budget ahead.

In terms of capital funding, the settlement will provide Cardiff with an additional £157,000 next year (1.15%). Whilst any additional funding is welcome, clearly, this sum will not have a significant impact on the Council's capital plans. More significantly, the Welsh Government also announced that £60million will be made available across Wales over a period of three years to support local authorities in repairing damage to roads resulting from the winter snow and summer heatwaves.

I welcome the fact that the Welsh Government has identified Local Government as a priority for additional funding should the UK Budget on 29th October 2018 make extra resources available for Wales. However, we will not have full visibility of that until details of the Final Settlement are published on 19th December 2018. In the meantime, we need to continue to work towards balancing the budget and a number of draft budget proposals will be released for consultation next month.

Brexit

Following the decision of Cabinet on 11th October 2018, I will be writing to the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, to request any and all information and analysis, even if deemed confidential, about the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU under a 'No Deal' scenario. It is vital that the Council, as well as other public services in Cardiff, are able to draw on all available evidence, as well as the findings of preparatory work and risk assessments that have been undertaken by the UK Government, in advance of the UK leaving the European Union on 29th March 2019. This will enable us to respond accordingly in planning effectively for business continuity and mitigating the potential risks to the economic and social well-being of our communities.

Staff Engagement

The autumn programme of staff engagement got off to a flying start with the Capital Ambition staff event taking place in City Hall on 2nd October 2018. Over 200 members of staff attended the event to take part in a two-hour session, which included presentations on Children's Services and the Council's digital journey, as well as a 'Question Time'-style session where staff had the opportunity to ask me about anything. Questions asked ranged from the budget, the future of County Hall, Brexit, the progress on Cardiff Music City, the best and worst bits so far in my time as Leader, and the biggest challenges and opportunities in the year ahead. Feedback from the event has been extremely positive and I would like to thank the Communications & Media Team for all their hard work setting up the event and behind the scenes on the day ensuring that the event ran smoothly.

Following the event I spent a few days touring the city to meet staff from different teams across the Council. This gave me the opportunity to learn about different service areas and to personally thank staff for all the hard work that takes place day in, day out to deliver Capital Ambition. I met with staff from frontline services, including street cleansing, social services (children's and adults), housing and highways, as well as the teams in C2C and the Huggard Centre. One of the highlights was seeing the refurbished Grand Avenue Older People's Day Centre in Ely, which will provide people suffering from advanced dementia with the care and dignity they deserve.

I was keen to hear about staff's experiences of working for the Council, whether they have worked for the organisation for many years, or have only recently started their journey with us on apprenticeships or work experience placements. The visits highlighted that there is much for us to celebrate and be proud of, as I saw for myself the sheer determination and dedication teams have in delivering the best possible services for the people of Cardiff.

I want to thank all the staff who took time out of their busy schedules to welcome me into their workplace and to tell me how things are going in their areas, highlighting both the successes and the challenges. I am looking forward to visiting more service areas over the coming weeks and months, and learning more about how we are all working for Cardiff.

Music Strategy / PRS Foundation Talent Development Conference

I was delighted to be asked to open the PRS Foundation Talent Development Conference, 'Investing in the Future of Music', at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama earlier this month. This event brought together UK music organisations, policy-makers and cultural pioneers to take a fresh look at the issues faced by music creators at the start of their careers and the help which is currently available. Investing in the future of music is something very close to my heart, and my Administration has committed to developing a music strategy for Cardiff. Our work developing this strategy with Sound Diplomacy has been ongoing for over 10 months and I look forward to sharing the findings and recommendations of the music strategy later in the year.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
19 October 2018