

STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Brexit Preparedness Update

Pending approval or otherwise by the UK Parliament of a new Brexit deal this month ahead of 31 October 2019 when the UK is due to leave the EU, work has continued in recent weeks on Brexit planning and preparation, with a specific focus on a No-Deal scenario. Last month, the Auditor General for Wales reaffirmed his assessment that a No-Deal *“remains a possible outcome; for which public services in Wales need to be prepared”*.

As I have previously updated Council, established processes are in place to reasonably plan, prepare and respond to the identified issues which may occur as a consequence of Brexit. The Council continues to engage with National Government, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Public Service Delivery partners through established structures to identify and respond to relevant issues.

The work has included a review of Business Continuity Plans and Emergency Planning Arrangements, as well as the production of Assurance Statements by Directorates confirming that arrangements are in place to respond to issues identified by local, regional and national planning work. This has included a consideration of the resilience of supply chains, particularly those supporting key services. A Brexit Issues Register has been developed by the Council, which consolidates all identified risks, issues and mitigating action. The Issues Register responds to all major issues identified in relation to Brexit and was considered by the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 16 October 2019.

Following an assessment of Local Authority preparedness for Brexit across Wales, which has been undertaken by Grant Thornton, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has concluded that: *“to the extent that preparation for a 'No deal' Brexit is possible, WLGA is confident that Local Authorities have taken sensible, proportionate steps and are as prepared as they can be. The coming weeks will determine if their contingency plans and measures have to be put into practice or whether this has been an expensive and time-consuming diversion from the ongoing delivery of vital council services to local residents”*.

Investing into UK Cities

As part of the MIPIM UK Summit that was held in London on 14-15 October 2019, I was pleased to speak at a breakfast forum event organised by the Department for International Trade, which was held at 10 Downing Street. I was invited to give a presentation to UK Government Ministers and key business partners, including representatives from a number of global investment organisations, on investment and development opportunities in Cardiff and the wider Cardiff Capital Region. These include key investment sites in the city such as Central Square/Metro Central, Dumballs Road, International Sports Village and Atlantic Wharf/Indoor Arena, as well as sites in Newport and Cwmbran. Senior representatives from Teeside and the West Midlands also gave presentations on investment opportunities within their own regions. The event generated a number of potential leads, which the Council's Economic Development team is currently pursuing.

National Democracy Week 2019

National Democracy Week took place on 14-20 October 2019 to celebrate and raise awareness of the democratic process and to encourage democratic participation so that everyone has their say. There are many ways to get involved in democracy and one of the most important ways is by voting in elections and referendums. If any Cardiff resident is not yet registered to vote, they should visit the UK Government website at: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. It only takes 5 minutes and a National Insurance number is required.

Over the course of the week, the Council was active in encouraging everyone to #TalkDemocracy across our social media channels using the hashtag #NDW2019. In addition, National Democracy Week posters were displayed at County Hall, City Hall and Willcox House which provided more details about all the ways that people can get involved in local democracy.

Global Climate Strike

On 20 September 2019, an estimated 1,300-1,400 people, including many children and young people, gathered in Cardiff to participate in the global climate strike. They marched from Cardiff Castle to the National Museum of Wales, before heading to the Senedd in Cardiff Bay, to protest about the need for action by national governments to tackle the global climate emergency.

Schools in Cardiff were advised to mark pupils on strike as being 'Absent' and we hope that schools showed common sense and leniency with those pupils who took part and did not attend school. As I made clear in the statement that I made on the day, if I was still of school-going age, then I would have been on strike alongside the children and young people who marched in Cardiff, which is why I joined them on the march in a personal capacity.

The Council is determined to play a leading role within Wales in addressing climate change. Declaring a Climate Emergency was an important first step, but critically, we are following this up with action, including:

- signalling the Council's wish to divest its pension funds from fossil fuels;
- commencing construction of a 10mw Solar Farm at Lamby Way;
- investing record amounts in active travel infrastructure and developing a transport vision that massively increases the use of public transport in Cardiff; and
- bringing forward an innovative district heating scheme and continuing to improve on our status as the best major city for recycling in the UK.

Climate change is the most important issue we face as a species and, in the next few months, we will be bringing forward a revised 'One Planet Cardiff' strategy to ensure that Cardiff plays its full part in the solutions to this global crisis.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
18 October 2019