



County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2000

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2000

CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting TUESDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2020, 4.30 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting, together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk

11 **Correspondence following committee meeting** (*Pages 3 - 12*)

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My Ref: T: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr NH

Date: 15 October 2020



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Peter Bradbury
Cabinet Member, Culture & Leisure
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Bradbury,

Playground Areas Refurbishment

Thank you for attending Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee on 13 October 2020, along with Steve Morris and Rosie James to discuss the above.

Members were interested to understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on playgrounds. We applaud the safety first approach taken to re-opening playgrounds in line with Welsh Government guidance and the clear communication campaign to raise public awareness of re-openings and safety measures. We note that lessons have been learnt that can be applied in the event of further closures and re-openings and that Welsh Government has been requested to provide regulations and guidance as far in advance as possible prior to announcing reopening dates.

Members were also keen to understand the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of the planned play area Section 106 and capital programme funded schemes, some of which had already slipped from their scheduled implementation. Members note the pandemic has compounded delays to scheduled works, with an impact on the availability of staff and materials to undertake refurbishment. Members heard that there is currently a £4.2M backlog in Section 106 schemes and a £533,000 backlog in Capital Programme schemes. Members are reassured to hear that there are no red risks with regard to Section 106 schemes, with none being near their time limit.

Members were pleased to hear that you have given clear political direction to tackle the backlogs and spend the monies; playgrounds are essential for children and young people's health and well-being and have an impact on overall communities in terms of addressing anti-social behaviour.

Overall, Members broadly support the proposed plans to address the backlogs, including an annual delivery programme, additional capacity via consultants, agency

staff and utilising in-house expertise and implementing a new procurement framework. It is clear that the service area needs more capacity to be able to demonstrate that spend can be achieved and schemes delivered. This in turn will strengthen the case when arguing for additional resources to renew existing playgrounds and look at new play experiences, including disabled and accessible play space, which Members were pleased to hear you support. Members also noted the issues with revenue resource for reactive repairs and maintenance of playgrounds, which are important to ensure timely repairs.

Members are pleased to hear that a schedule programme showing dates for schemes will be circulated to Members in the near future and that you welcome suggestions from Members on appropriate schemes to use available play area Section 106 monies in their wards.

At the meeting, we discussed how best to provide adventure play areas and we recommended that officers speak to Wrexham Council to find out how they have managed to deliver three adventure play areas; we are pleased that Steve Morris offered to do this and we request that Members be informed of the outcome of this.

Finally, Members note that new drainage regulations may lead to significant additional costs and that Steve Morris will ask his team to provide a ballpark figure for how much these could be; we look forward to receiving this information.

Thanks again to you and all who attended with you for this informative scrutiny. This letter requires a response, please, regarding the following:

- Outcome of the recommendation that officers speak to Wrexham Council regarding how they have delivered three adventure play areas;
- The ballpark figure for costs due to the new drainage regulations.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee
Neil Hanratty Jon Maidment
Steve Morris Rosie James
Clair James Cabinet Support Office

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM44555
Dyddiad / Date: 29 October 2020

Councillor Nigel Howells
C/O Member Services
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Butetown
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Nigel

Economy & Culture Scrutiny 13 Oct - Playground Area Refurbishment

Thank you for the opportunity to bring this item to Scrutiny and for the many positives comments about our Parks Playground management of lockdown due to COVID 19 and the processes we now have in place to ensure delivery of the Section 106 and Capital play-ground schemes.

Officers have made contact with Wrexham Council to understand the rationale and cost of the adventure play model adopted and are also making enquiries through the Core Cities group in this regard, with a view of offering this as an option for Sec 106 future schemes based on Ward Member approval.

The drainage implications and estimated costs is a much more difficult area to quantify. Every park and associated playground has very different characteristics in terms of ground conditions, surfacing, connectivity to drainage, flood risk and topography. Therefore, each project will have its own bespoke drainage solutions based on the new SAB regulations and individual expenditure line.

I propose that these individual cost items are highlighted with the Ward Members as we consult and update on each individual project.

I trust the above information is of assistance, however should you require any further information, please contact Steve Morris, Operational Manager, Sport, Leisure and Development on Cardiff 2233 0235.

Yn gywir
Yours sincerely



Y Cyngorydd / Councillor Councillor Peter Bradbury
Aelod Cabinet Dros Ddiwylliant a Hamdden
Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure



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My Ref: T: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr NH

Date: 16 October 2020



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

Councillor Caro Wild
Cabinet Members
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Councillor Wild,

Castle Street Closure

On behalf of the Committee Members, thank you for attending the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee with Andrew Gregory, Neil Hanratty, Jason Bale and Richard Hyett to discuss the Castle Street closure. Members note that this forms part of a package of measures to implement the Cardiff Recovery Strategy, enabling social distancing and providing outdoor space that hospitality businesses could utilise, with the aim of safely attracting people back into the city centre.

Members wished to explore the economic impact of the closure of Castle Street. We heard from FOR Cardiff and officers at the meeting that it is very difficult to assess the economic impact. This is because it is hard to disentangle its impact from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic overall and the impact of other schemes put in place to assist hospitality businesses, such as Eat Out to Help Out and temporary pavement licences in St Mary Street and High Street. However, it is possible to measure some of the direct impact for eateries involved in the Café Quarter; we note that circa 60,000 orders were placed overall, with circa £425,000 generated in August 2020. We also note the positive comments and anecdotal evidence from quotes, tweets and posts.

A key area that Members explored was how the closure of Castle Street has affected access to the city centre and the impact of this on the economy. Members are clear that good access is critical to the future success of Cardiff's city centre and wished to understand the impact of the closure on buses, taxis, cars and overall footfall.

Members heard from officers that they have received concerns about the lack of access to city centre drop off points for buses. Members also highlighted issues raised with them regarding car access, in terms of a lack of forewarning and signage for alternative routes, and FOR Cardiff's point that it is impossible to know if people were put off coming into the city centre.

However, Members note that footfall overall in the city centre has increased during the time period of the road closure and Café Quarter, with footfall in August 2020 15%-18% higher than in other core cities. Members heard that the closure helped change footfall patterns, providing a city centre square that linked St Mary Street/ High Street with Queen Street and that this in itself helped to improve access to the city centre.

Members were interested to explore witnesses' views on the impact on other businesses, located nearby and elsewhere in the city centre, having received anecdotal evidence of negative impact on arcades and shopping centres. We note the views expressed that it is hard to assess but that the increased footfall should have benefitted the whole of the city centre.

Overall, Members wish to pass on their thanks and congratulations to all those involved for their work to date. We believe an attractive, safe space with novelty value was created, which showed Cardiff was open for business and this, along with the other city centre schemes, enabled footfall to recover and helped minimise loss to the eateries involved. Members are clear that we now need to build on this. Footfall is declining, with the Centre for Cities report showing that only London and Oxford have a worse decline. Members note that this could be linked to employment patterns, with more people in Cardiff employed in sectors where they are able to work from home, and that it will be influenced by weather patterns, the end of school holidays, local lockdowns and general uncertainty about people's economic future.

Members were therefore keen to understand plans for the future, given that the Castle Street road closure has been implemented under temporary measures. Members heard that an urgent review is taking place over the next couple of weeks to resolve further temporary usage of Castle Street whilst officers from across the Council work on developing a suite of possible permanent options for Castle Street.

Members note that these permanent options will aim to maximise place making, transport and economic benefits, and will take place in the context of plans for other spill-out spaces and systematic upgrading of spaces. Members also note that future spill-out areas will be located near to the businesses that use them, which will reduce costs.

Members appreciate that the development of these options will take time to generate and consult on and that implementation is months away. In terms of consultation, Members were pleased to hear that there will be opportunities for full engagement on future proposals, with comprehensive consultation on permanent proposals, including residents, communities, businesses, major employers, public transport users and road users.

Members believe that the time is now right to trial other approaches to transport usage, so that people will have experiences of these to draw on to inform their responses to options developed for consultation and the Council will have monitoring evidence to inform their decision making. Members **recommend** that two approaches are trialled, consecutively; one enabling bus, taxi, cycle and pedestrian usage; and one trialling the previous proposals put forward for single lanes in both directions, for use by all vehicles, including cars. We are in unprecedented, unpredictable times and we do not know the impact of rising unemployment, the end of the Job Retention Scheme, the start of the Job Support Scheme and changing consumer patterns; we need to trial new approaches and remain flexible, engaging and consulting with stakeholders to define what we need to achieve. Members **recommend** that the consultation with stakeholders is also used to define what it is we need to achieve to ensure a viable city centre and to select a matrix of measures based on this; it is understandable and laudable that the aim to date has been to minimise the loss for businesses but is this enough going forward?

Finally, Members wish to gently suggest that in future there is more fluency between uses for the space created by the Castle Street closure. It will take time to implement a permanent solution and there may be several temporary uses in the meantime - it should be possible to marry up uses and avoid a gap. Members seek to understand why it has been necessary to have a gap on this occasion and would like your response to **provide the reasons** for this.

Our thanks to you and those who attended with you; Members found the discussion useful and helpful and recognise the challenges faced in finding the best permanent solution. We look forward to seeing proposals and wish to scrutinise these, from an economic viewpoint.

This letter requires a response, please, to the recommendations highlighted above and the request for reasons for the gap in usage.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Russell Goodway
Andrew Gregory Neil Hanratty
Jason Bale Richard Hyett
Clair James Imelda Seymour
Cabinet Support Office

Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM44565

24 November 2020

Councillor Nigel Howells
Chair Person
Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Cllr Howells,

Castle Street Closure

Thank you for your letter dated 16th October 2020 in relation to the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee. It was really welcome to be able to discuss a controversial subject in a diligent and pragmatic manner.

I can confirm that future Cabinet reports on proposed changes to Castle Street will be made available for Scrutiny as requested. In the interim, I can update that we are re-opening Castle Street to buses, taxis and emergency vehicles as a temporary measure while a public consultation is held on the future of the thoroughfare. The proposed re-opening – which will be ready by late-November - will help buses and taxis cross east to west and west to east. This temporary design will seek to ensure that the pop-up cycleway - which will run from Leckwith Road up Newport Road to the junction with Broadway – will be retained throughout the public consultation. The temporary measure under consideration will also include the pavement alongside the shops and bars opposite the castle - extended into the road to give a wider walkway for people to socially distance. It could also create an opportunity for hospitality businesses to have more space outside their premises to trade. Castle Street could then contain two lanes for buses and taxis to travel east and or west, and the pop-up cycle lane by the castle would remain. It is anticipated that the proposed scheme would bed-in before the Christmas season begins.

While these temporary arrangements continue to progress, it is also proposed to consult with the public and businesses on three options for a permanent scheme on Castle Street. These are:

- Fully pedestrianising Castle Street, except emergency vehicles, delivery vehicles, while retaining the segregated cycleway; or
- Access to buses, taxis, emergency and delivery vehicles only, while retaining the segregated cycleway; or

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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· Opening the road to all traffic, in line with the Clean Air Plan that was proposed before COVID-19. This involves a segregated cycleway in either direction, one lane of traffic in either direction for motor vehicles and retaining the existing bus lane, to allow buses to travel in a dedicated bus lane from North Road towards Westgate Street.

The consultation on these options is proposed to start at the beginning of December and after considering the responses to the consultation, along with technical advice and all other relevant factors, a Cabinet report will be drafted to determine which option to proceed with.

I trust the above is of assistance. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact either my officers or myself directly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caro Wild', with a small flourish at the end.

Cynghorydd / Councillor Caro Wild
Aelod Cabinet dros Gynllunio Strategol a Thrafnidiaeth
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport