

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2020

Present: Councillor Howells(Chairperson)
Councillors Henshaw, Gordon, Gavin Hill-John, Parkhill, Robson
and Sattar

Naz Ismail (Youth Representative)

10 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Simmons.

11 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

12 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 December and 17 December 2019 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

13 : CARDIFF COMMITMENT: UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation briefing providing a progress update on the results of work carried out to implement the 'Cardiff Commitment'. Members were asked to consider the results of the work to date and make comments, observations or recommendations to inform the way forward.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Sarah Merry, Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning and Councillor Russell Goodway, Cabinet Member for Investment and Development to the meeting. The Cabinet Members were joined by a number of officers from the Economic Development and Education service areas.

The Committee was advised that the administration's policy programme aims to prioritise the delivery of the 'Cardiff Commitment: helping young people, particularly those from disadvantages and deprived communities, into employment, education and training' and ensuring that every child has access to these opportunities when leaving school. The Cardiff Commitment is included in the Public Service Board Well Being Plan 2018-23, the Council's Corporate Plan, the Capital Ambition Delivery Programme and Cardiff 2030 Vision for education and learning in Cardiff.

The Council has secured 206 business pledges to the Cardiff Commitment, building a strong partnership between employers and schools. The pledges offer a range of opportunities, including work experience, across the public, private and third sector. Cardiff Council has also increased the range of opportunities it offers young people, including apprenticeships, traineeships and work placements. Furthermore, 'Open Your Eyes' week has provided an opportunity for schools to engage with businesses around opportunities and career pathways.

Members were advised that the number of young people not in education, employment or training at the end of the 2018/19 academic year was 1.9%. This represents an improvement of previous years. However, the percentage of care leavers not in education, employment or training rose from 50.6% to 60% during 2018/19.

The Committee received a presentation, following which Members were asked to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. The debate is summarised as follows:

- Members welcomed the fall in young people not in employment, education or training. Members asked if the Year 11 pupil role is used as the baseline for monitoring purposes and whether some young people were 'falling through the net'. Officers stated that a census of all Year 11 pupils is taken each January. Then in the following October data is collected to track whether those young people are in employment, education or training. Officers confirmed that all Year 11 pupils are tracked.
- • Members understood the reasoning for focussing the Cardiff Commitment in the Southern Arc of the City. However, Members also considered that employers will wish to engage with talent from across the City. Officers stated that the scheme's ambition is City-wide and its success is forged in networks and partnerships with other agencies. The Council needs to find the means by which opportunities can be shared across the city and there is potential in every young person. Officers also indicated that employers are engaging directly with schools outside of the Cardiff Commitment scheme. This is encouraging and will continue.
- The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong commented that the quality of applications for school governors has improved markedly. The Cabinet Member considered that, in this regard, the Council's call has been heard by business in the city.
- Members asked whether officers are working with the most vulnerable school pupils such as those currently attending Pupil Referral Units. Officer confirmed that they are working with those pupils but that this presents a particular set of challenges, such as how to best provide the intensive support these pupils need. All pupils are invited to hosted events and officers have met with Pupil Referral Units individually.
- Members asked whether the authority is able to track the career paths of school leavers. Officers advised that this would be very challenging. There were 3220 school leavers last year, though potentially it may be possible to track a smaller cohort.
- Members asked whether there were any notable employers not participating in the scheme. Officers indicated that participation in the scheme may be down to capacity. The scheme has been positively received by all but resource capacity in the Council limits time available to make introductions and build relationships .

- Responding to a question from the Committee, Officers advised that they are working with a small resource and the support of willing partners. Additional resources would allow for relationships to be brokered with further and higher education partners in the City; ensure vulnerable young people are supported through the process; and ensure employers and academic institutions are identified who are able to provide specialist support to schools, such as in the sciences.
- Members were advised that other local authorities are coming to Cardiff seeking advice in terms of setting up similar initiatives. That others see the value in the scheme was a good sign.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson write on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Members conveying the Committee’s observations during the way forward.

14 : CARDIFF HARBOUR AUTHORITY REVIEW: UPDATE

The Committee received a report providing a summary of the Cardiff Harbour Authority review report recently published by the Welsh Government. The Committee had an opportunity to review the report’s findings, its implications for the Council and key stakeholders and the next steps in the process.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Jon Maidment, Operational Manager – Cardiff Harbour Authority and Mark Williams, Head of Regeneration Strategy, Welsh Government, to the meeting.

Members were advised that the Cardiff Bay Barrage Act 1993 sets out the legislative framework for the Harbour Authority, outlining the main statutory responsibilities. A Section 165 agreement sets out the contract between the Council and the Welsh Government regarding the Harbour Authority in terms of its obligations and funding. The funding provided by the Welsh Government is ring-fenced and can only be spent on Harbour Authority related activities.

The Harbour Authority is responsible for the management of the Barrage and the Bay, including the Rivers Taff and Ely up to the weirs at Blackweir and the former Arjo Wiggins site. The Authority is also responsible for maintaining water quality and environmental management. Specific responsibilities were detailed in the report.

In December 2018 the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council agreed to undertake a review of the Harbour Authority. The emerging findings from this review were presented to Committee at their meeting in May. The final copy of the report was included in the Committee report at Appendix A. A summary of the findings and recommendations was included.

Councillor Bradbury was invited to make a statement. The Cabinet Member stated that the recommendations received in a written statement from the Minister will be considered. The Council and Welsh Government are committed to ensuring that sustainable arrangements continue and the good job Cardiff Council does is recognised.

Mark Williams of Welsh Government provided a verbal update and summary of the Welsh Government report.

Members were invited to comment, seek clarification or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members highlighted concerns that at a time when resources are retracting the Council needs to carefully consider its responsibilities. Mark Williams agreed and stated that any financial settlement would need to be commensurate with the Council's responsibilities and meet the costs.
- Members asked about future groundwater pumping needs and costs. Officers advised that, in terms of groundwater, there are some small residual costs for two remaining substations and offered to share the report on this
- Members heard that asset renewal presented the biggest risk. It was critical that an assessment of ageing infrastructure is undertaken moving forward and it was hoped that a provisional costed programme would be forthcoming in Spring, following a review by ARUP. Members were asked to note that the Welsh Government review report only related to fixed costs and that future asset renewal costs would fall to Welsh Government.
- Members were pleased to note a reduction in dredging costs of 50% following negotiations between the Harbour Authority and Associated British Ports. Members asked whether there was any scope for further reductions. Officers indicated that a recent survey report informed the negotiations and it was anticipated that any further reductions would be difficult.
- The Cabinet Member considered that the report indicates that, whilst the Harbour Authority is permitted to maximise income, there weren't further large savings which could be realised. The Harbour Authority was performing well, providing value for money, and there was no need to change the current relationship.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson write on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Members conveying the Committee's observations during the way forward.

15 : CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee noted the correspondence since the last meeting.

16 : EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The following item is confidential and exempt from publication as it contains exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 14 and 16 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from a meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.

RESOLVED - That the public be excluded during consideration of this item.

17 : URGENT ITEM - TOWN CENTRE LOAN SCHEME APPLICATION APPROVAL

The Committee received a draft Cabinet report seeking approval for a loan funding under the Welsh Government funded Town Centre Loan Scheme relating to the completion of the Coal Exchange development at Mount Stuart Square.

Members were advised that the Coal Exchange is one of the most historic buildings in Wales as the centre-piece of the international coal trade and the heart of the business community. The building is designated a 'Grade II' listed building. The building fell into disrepair and following significant water ingress it was deemed to have become a dangerous structure. The Council was forced to use its powers under the Building Act to make the building safe. The costs incurred were secured in the form of a charge against the building.

The building was acquired by Signature Living Ltd, a private hotel group from the North of England. Signature Living agreed to refurbish the building without the requirement of a grant from the public sector. Following planning permission and building consent, works began in 2016.

To date £15 million has been spend creating 56 bedrooms and refurbishing the Coal Exchange Hall; a new bar and restaurant; and undertaking some external stone repair and cleaning. However, further sections of the building need to be refurbished and be brought back into use to create a hotel with 173 bedroom and thus improve the financial sustainability of the hotel.

The Council has been awarded Repayable Loan Funding by Welsh Government for Town Centre Regeneration. The scheme has prioritised regenerations scheme in Butetown and Grangetown such as the Tramshed, Butetown Railway Station and Merchant Place. The aim of the scheme is to unlock sites and buildings through the provision of interest free loans over a short period. A key requirement is that funding must be secured.

The Council has funding capacity within the scheme and has approached Welsh Government with a view to potentially providing a loan to Signature Living to support the completion of the Coal Exchange development.

The Committee was asked to consider the application and comment as appropriate. Members debated the proposals. The Committee were broadly supportive of the application.

RESOLVED – That the Chairperson write on behalf of the Committee to the Cabinet Members conveying the Committee's observations during the way forward.

18 : CULTURE SHORT SCRUTINY: NEXT STEPS

The Committee received a report setting out the key findings and recommendations of the Culture Short Scrutiny exercise. Members were asked to consider and agree the key findings and recommendations.

Members agreed to the following areas as key findings: the importance of Culture to the economy, health and well-being; Cardiff's cultural offer is very distinctive and high quality; Cardiff has resource strengths but also the level of council resource has reduced and there is now a risk to corporate memory; partnership working is seen to be working well; there is clear evidence of work undertaken to ensure accessibility and inclusivity; it is important to have impact measures in place; the future role of the Council in providing leadership and facilitation; the need to develop a cultural strategy, tackle silo working and continue to develop a cultural compact; to work with partners to boost resource levels; to work with public sector partners to align resources in line with Well Being of Future Generations Act; to market the cultural offer by working with partners; to develop original, innovative and modern branding; and to enhance the Visit Cardiff website. Members agreed recommendations covering the following areas: strategic leadership; cultural strategy; cultural compact; exploring resource levers including assets and developer contributions; exploring financial levers; ensuring commitment to culture covers all of Cardiff and grassroots culture; protecting the corporate memory; improving marketing including developing a better brand, use of website, social media and screens in Cardiff; tackling silo working; utilising 'thriving culture' element of Well Being of Future Generations Act; and ensuring impact measures are established. It was agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Officer circulate the draft recommendations, key findings and main report to Members of the Committee for feedback. The finalised report would be agreed by the Committee via email.

19 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 18 February 2020 at 4.30pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm