

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2020

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

Eshaan Rajesh, Carey Davies

37 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Parkhill.

The Chairperson congratulated Councillor Parkhill on the birth of his son.

The Chairperson welcomed Eshaan Rajesh – Youth Council Representative and Carey Davies, support worker to the meeting.

38 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

39 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 5 November 2020 and 16 November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

40 : IMPACT OF C-19 PANDEMIC ON MUSIC SECTOR IN CARDIFF

The Chairperson advised that this item was to enable Members to consider the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the music sector in Cardiff, how to support the sector and how best to aid the recovery process. The Chairperson was delighted that members of Cardiff's Music Board were in attendance, including Guto and Nick who have direct experience of the impact of the pandemic on live music venues in Cardiff. The cover report and appendices provide an overview of the impact of the pandemic and work to date to support the sector. Committee have the opportunity to explore with panellists how to address this impact and ensure that the music sector in Cardiff is positioned to thrive in the future.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Thomas – Leader & Chair, Cardiff Music Board; Cllr Bradbury – Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure & Cardiff Music Board; Guto Brychan – Clwb Ifor Bach, Cardiff Music Board & Welsh Government's Covid Support Group; Nick Saunders – Depot, Shangri-La Events & Cardiff Music Board; Neil Hanratty – Director of Economic Development; Jon Day – Operational Manager – Economic Strategy and Ruth Cayford – Creative Industries and Culture Manager.

The Chairperson invited the Leader to make a statement in which stressed the central importance of Culture and Music to Cardiff, stating that it adds to the richness of the City and contributes to the economy. He noted the well evidenced economic, social and cultural benefits which had been drawn out in the Music Strategy and the

value Music in its own right as an art form brings to the City. The Leader noted the devastating impact that Covid-19 had had on the sector and that it had been closed since March for gigs and events; music pre-Covid was a growing industry and it was important not to have scars of Covid-19 affecting the aspirations for Cardiff as a Music City. With regards to Council support, it was noted that the Council has lobbied Welsh Government for sector support to engage safely and at pace next year.

The Leader added that the Arena development was a statement of the importance that Cardiff places on Music and the confidence it has of the role live music will play in the eco-system of the City; it is the missing piece of the jigsaw and the Council will continue to work with the Music Board to take on the challenges.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited statements from witnesses;

Guto Brychan explained that Clwb Ifor Bach, a grassroots music venue and nightclub, had been closed since March and had only opened for 5 weeks at the end of September, with a 10pm curfew which was not financially viable. The majority of staff were on furlough with 3 members of staff continuing to work. 50/100 shows had to be rearranged, some several times. There was an appetite to return when possible, but in the meantime there was a need to maintain the diary in readiness to open when safe to do so. More clarity was needed on an opening roadmap.

Nick Saunders – Depot, Shangri-La Events & Cardiff Music Board stated that they had been quite fortunate in that they have been able to adapt and open when they could do so with some events but no live performances. Festivals have had to be moved back to next year and were still uncertain as to whether they would go ahead or not. In England, some large performances have taken place but none in Wales. He considered that there needed to be a conversation around this sooner rather than later.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments;

Member asked how the music scene can adapt and diversify in the short term before there is a return to normality. Guto Brychan stated that they have gone for a long period of time with no income, relying on funds from the Arts Council, local Council and Welsh Government. To look at new ventures such as drive through events would mean spending money without any evidence of a return so they were reticent to do so as the risk was too great. He has been working in different areas of the industry such as management, record label and working in a wider way with the industry in Cardiff and supporting the music infrastructure in the City.

Nick Saunders added that momentum and continuity was needed behind events to have the confidence in doing them, but there was an appetite from a Welsh customer perspective. Guto Brychan stated that there was a growing gap between what is able to be done in Wales compared to England; this gap will grow with test events planned in Feb/March for Wales, but England holding outdoor events in April; there was a possibility of missing tours on the event landscape.

With regards to diversification, Nick Saunders explained that they had been able to put on some socially distanced food led events and they could have easily had controlled live music events too. He stressed the importance of being engaged in the roadmap sooner rather than later. Guto Brychan noted that they were fortunate to have a dialogue with the Council and the Music Board and have met throughout lockdown; other cities venues don't have that level of support. Cardiff Council is proactive in helping businesses with applying for grants, as are some sections of Welsh Government, however it is vitally important to involve the sector in a dialogue with regards to the roadmap, the plan, timescales for re-opening etc.

Members asked about changes in regulations and going forward if social distancing is in place for some time, what the financial impact would be. Guto Brychan explained that so far they have mostly remained closed and have lost around £5/6k in stock. He added that there was an issue around the interpretation of the regulations as they vary from Council to Council and people interpret the regulations in different ways. Nick Saunders added that from his perspective they have lost a huge proportion of their income and the alcohol sales ban had made this worse; 70 staff had been furloughed and they were not confident to open until they knew the reopening plan.

The Youth Representative asked a question around the ambitions/aims of the industry as it enters a vaccine/post-covid economy and whether there was plan set for this. Guto Brychan stated they would be one of the last sectors to open, there was no priority being given for vaccines for the under 50's who were the main clients so they would plan for next year or even the year after that. He added that they certainly could not plan to open with a 10pm curfew; after that he would like to see socially distanced events, although these would not work financially long term.

The Leader wished to remind Members of the Music Strategy and that this work is still important, with some progress on the work stream such as music education; he added that he will look to accelerate this into the new year. A Music Officer would be appointed to liaise between the Council and the live music sector. There had been a plan to hold a live music event in the city in the Autumn, the rationale was still there when it was safe to do so. Also the indoor Arena would be delivered in 2/3 years' time; so there was a plan for music in the City going forward it just had to be looked at in a Covid context.

Nick Saunders added that very few people had requested refunds from postponed events which shows that people have an appetite to return. In the short term a road map for events was needed, after speaking to people in the sector they believe there could be events in May/June next year and are pushing for artists to be booked in. There was a reliance on Welsh Government, if not a vaccine then rapid testing and other regulations such as Government backed insurances etc. Guto Brychan added that Sound Diplomacy had produced a handbook – Music City Resilience which was worth looking at for creative solutions and ideas to support the sector while it is closed.

Members asked what could be done now to make the transition back to opening as easy as possible; also considering freelancers and performers. Guto Brychan stated that there was scope for the Music Board to do a health check on the sector, looking at venues and their ability to reopen etc. Also to look at freelancers, how many are left

and are able to return as there will undoubtedly be casualties. There needs to be a picture of what can be done to support the industry to survive the transition. There will be challenges such as getting event dates rebooked and a lockdown economy and Brexit next year will add to the challenges faced by the industry.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

41 : ATLANTIC WHARF MASTERPLAN

The Chairperson advised that this item was to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of a report to Cabinet that seeks approval for the masterplan and authority to commence public consultation on the plan, followed by an outline planning application.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Goodway– Cabinet Member for Investment & Development; Neil Hanratty – Director of Economic Development and Chris Barnett – Operational Manager – Major Projects, to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised that all of the appendices are confidential and therefore Committee are required to consider the presentation and all Appendices in a closed session to discuss information deemed exempt, in accordance with paragraphs 14 and 16 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED: to move to closed session.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

42 : CORRESPONDENCE

The Chairperson advised that this item was to enable Members to receive an update on correspondence sent and received.

43 : WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairperson advised that this item was to note changes to the work programme, agree whether any further amendments were needed and agree for the information to be published on the Council's website.

Members noted that the date of the February meeting was now 22 February 2021.

44 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

45 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 14 JANUARY 2021 4.30PM

The meeting terminated at 7.20 pm