

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillor Wong (Chairperson)
Councillors Berman, Henshaw, Jenkins, Jones, Lloyd Jones,
Shimmin and Thomson

64 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

65 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Jackie Jones declared a personal interest in item 6 as a trustee of an organisation involved.

66 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

67 : CARDIFF SKATEBOARD AMENITY STRATEGY

The Chair advised that this item provided Members with background information to aid their scrutiny of the draft 'Cardiff Skateboard Amenity Strategy' report, due to be considered by Cabinet on 18th January.

For this item, the Chair welcomed Cllr Jennifer Burke (Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks & Events), Jon Maidment (Director of Economic Development), Steve Morris (OM Sport Leisure and Development) and Mark Synan (Landscape Architect, Parks Development).

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement, in which she emphasised the project's potential to help the city and young people by fostering both physical and mental wellbeing. They were building on increased interest in skateboarding and embracing modern design principles to build accessible, low-maintenance sites recognising the evolving needs of Cardiff's communities. It was a visionary strategy developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders, and aligned with broader objectives including the Cardiff Physical Activity and Sport Strategy and their status as a child-friendly city.

Officers added that the city's current skateboarding stock put a heavy burden on the annual maintenance budget, so there was a need to think differently moving forward. Existing skate parks, built largely of timber and steel frames, were easily vandalised, so they were moving towards concrete forms which brought significant benefits. A thorough public consultation took place in 2021 and received 709 responses, while

they had engaged heavily with Cardiff Skateboard Club and various council departments.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members.

The Committee discussed how the strategy could be factored into the council's work on other policy areas like planning and active travel. Officers were engaging with colleagues throughout the process, with departments such as economic development, highways, housing and planning closely involved. Skate parks could be built into public realm plans for major developments, with recent examples like Maltings Park in Splott showing how this could work well.

Members discussed the funding strategy and were reassured that ward councillors would be consulted in line with the usual process with S106 funds. Capital bids were not currently open due to the financial context but officers were hopeful that this could be an avenue for funding in the future. Members sought reassurance that ward councillors would be informed about the Strategy, and noted Cllr Burke's statement that she would reach out to ward members and explain the positive benefits.

The Committee heard that maintenance costs were a key driver behind the strategy, and that moving from steel and wood to concrete would reduce long-term costs while also enabling them to enhance existing sites. Officers added that skate parks were intended to be accessible and inclusive, accommodating both entry-level skaters and those with more experience.

Members asked whether any of this work could be done in-house, and heard that it could not as they did not have the requisite skills. It could be challenging finding contractors, both for general infrastructure programs and skate park specialists, but officers were building relationships with known providers and targeting their approach more carefully to direct potential bidders. They could ask for apprenticeships as part of the social value element of procurement, and there was a design and installation apprentice in place who would shadow these works.

Members heard that the benefits of skateboarding were not only physical, with research demonstrating that skate facilities had a positive impact on antisocial behaviour and enabled young people to have positive engagement with their community. Members noted the need to light skate parks well, particularly during the winter months, to encourage year-round use. Officers agreed with this, although they stressed it was dependent on funding, and noted that curfews could be used if needed to take residents' concerns into account.

Officers provided more information about how suitable sites were identified, with wide-ranging consultation including engagement with Cardiff Skateboard Club, which had highlighted a neighbourhood park in Llanishen particularly well suited for this purpose. Public transport links were also taken into account, and it was noted that skateboarders tended to be willing to travel to their destination.

Members asked whether further consideration could be given to provision in Cardiff West, given the growth of Plasdŵr and existing provision in Morganstown. Officers explained the reprovision in Morganstown and elsewhere would be an improvement

on existing provision and that there is scope for additional 'dots' and 'spots' provision, as outlined in the Strategy, in additional locations if required.

Members asked that consideration be given re how to ensure the Strategy does not result in informal skate areas, such as Callaghan Square and Central Square, being overly policed once there are formal skate areas; Members are aware of the need for both formal and informal areas and would not want the Strategy being used to stop this. Members noted Cllr Burke's agreement re the need to consider this and ensure informal spaces were available.

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.

68 : ATLANTIC WHARF UPDATE

The Chair advised that this item provided Members with background information to aid their scrutiny of the draft 'Atlantic Wharf Regeneration Update' report, due to be considered by Cabinet on 18th January.

For this item, the Chair welcomed Cllr Russell Goodway (Cabinet Member for Investment & Development), Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development), Donna Jones (Assistant Director, County Estates) and Chris Barnett (OM Major Projects).

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement before Members were provided with a presentation by officers.

During the presentation, officers gave an update on the market testing exercise for the Red Dragon Centre redevelopment, which had identified a preferred bidder, and the Atlantic Wharf Car Parking Strategy, which obligated the council to provide 1300 new spaces and retain 900 more. The £35m funding envelope, part of the Arena Funding Strategy, had been approved by Cabinet in November, including funding for the Multi Storey Car Park, and an opportunity had arisen to acquire the Pierhead Street Q-Parks multi-storey car park, which could be achieved from within the approved financial envelope. Officers also outlined how the potential risks of these proposals were being mitigated.

The Chair invited questions and comments from Members.

The Committee discussed housing delivery, with officers confirming that Plot 22 had been selected as the most suitable site for 500 units. This site ran along the side of County Hall so it was contingent on County Hall moving, and an alternative site would have to be identified if this did not transpire. Officers stated the decision on the future of County Hall and the decision on 500 units of housing provision would be taken at the same time, so that there was transparency about whether could proceed. Officers also clarified that the 500 units were in addition to the 20% affordable housing requirement.

On the topic of Lloyd George Avenue, Members heard that the public consultation intended to start at the very beginning with a blank canvas. Their general principle would likely be to reduce the carriageway as it was underutilised for its size, but this was dependent on the consultation, and both sides of the highway needed to be improved. Members highlighted the opportunity to improve the walkway to the city centre and some members advocated segregated cycle lanes. Officers highlighted the need to ensure the design shepherded people towards the middle of the Avenue, thus reducing the impact on local residents.

Members discussed car parking provision, noting that the Pierhead Street car park had low ceilings which might not be suitable for construction vehicles. Officers explained that separate arrangements were being made for construction vehicles, and they would work with the arena to provide space for construction workers' card. Members were glad to hear that the construction partner was being encouraged to hire locally where possible.

Members sought clarification on whether Senedd staff would be able to continue to use the Pierhead car park and noted officers' responses that, if they had a lease they would be able to but otherwise they would have to pay, as the Council needed to maximise its' income from the car park to help offset other costs.

Members wondered whether there could potentially be a decline in car parking income due to the cost of living crisis and increase in use of public transport, and heard that officers were confident spaces would be filled when events took place. Their car parking strategy sought to encourage arriving on foot or by public transport as much as possible, but acknowledged that there would always be a certain number of people who needed somewhere to park. One of the appendices looked in more detail at car parking, both in terms of usage over time and potential income generation.

The Committee discussed the redevelopment of the Red Dragon Centre and how the Aviva consortium plan would increase its density. The Cabinet Member had not met with Aviva yet, but when he did, he would stress the need to ensure that this increased density was not a detriment to the offer for families. It was important to offer affordable, attractive facilities so people came to the area for the day as well as the evening. Members suggested that pocket parks could be a part of this.

On the topic of transport to the Bay, Members discussed the plans for a direct link so those coming from the Valleys didn't need to change at Queen Street. Members also suggested that public transport coming from the eastern side of Cardiff could go directly to the bay before the city centre. Members asked about the park and ride scheme at Pentwyn and whether this would revert to its previous role as a link to the city centre; officers explained Transport colleagues would need to answer this but that they were aware other park and ride schemes were being discussed at the ISV site and at the Cardiff Parkway site. Members discussed the impact on local residents and the need to avoid a repetition of the situation in Grangetown when events took place at the Cardiff City Football Stadium.

Members enquired about whether there has been an assessment of the overall car parking in the vicinity and an assessment on the impact on this of car parking on event days – what would be the impact on local businesses? Officers responded that

most events would be in the evening, but Members noted some events happen during the day, such as the Urdd, which had affected parking for local businesses and offices. Officers explained local businesses could lease spaces and thus guarantee spaces, but otherwise it would be 'first come, first served'.

Members noted Cllr Goodway's intention to request a report from his Cabinet colleague responsible for transport, taking an overarching look at the various transport factors, such as proposed public transport improvements, including Metro and bus routes, car parking, active travel etc. and the interplay between these, to ensure that the overall transport provision will meet the overall needs.

Members highlighted page 539 of the pack, Appendix 7, point f, where a sentence tails off without resolution and the point does not include a view from the legal advisor, whereas a view is expressed in all the other points; Members queried whether this was right, given legal advice is needed on each and every point in the Appendix. Officers responded they would seek advice from the legal officer.

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting at this point during consideration of this item as the Committee discussed exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 14 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.

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.

69 : SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

The Chair advised that this item provided Members with background information to aid their scrutiny of the draft 'Shared Prosperity Fund Update' report, due to be considered by Cabinet on 18th January.

For this item, the Chair welcomed Cllr Huw Thomas (Leader of the Council), Jon Day (OM Tourism and Investment), Louise Bassett (OM Partnerships and Joint Commissioning) and Natalie Southgate (Partnership Delivery Team Leader, Housing & Communities).

The Leader was invited to make an opening statement before the Chair invited questions and comments from Members.

The Committee heard that some unallocated monies would be put aside for community capacity building, i.e. to help with the transition if there was a change in funding situation, for example due to a change of government nationally. Members were reassured by this contingency planning and also highlighted the focus on children and young people in the funding plan as a positive.

The Leader noted that he had taken part in discussions at the WLGA level about the risks of the funding not continuing, and found broad agreement there that a one-year

guarantee was needed, or at least extra funding to allow flexibility if they had to transition to a post-SPF world. A number of local authorities were reliant on SPF monies to deliver core services, although Cardiff was not one of them. The need to up the pace of spending was recognised at a regional level as well as locally.

Members asked how they could be sure that the open call for funding got round to as many organisations as possible, especially in the arts sector. The Leader was confident that it had been promoted effectively, with extensive third sector engagement, including via C3SC and specific events at City Hall, and the range of small organisations involved demonstrated this.

The Committee discussed how outputs and outcomes were measured, and how to ensure that it could be codified that SPF monies were being well spent. Officers explained that SPF conditions require a lot of information to be gathered on outputs and that Cardiff has also aligned SPF to the Council's Stronger, Fairer, Greener criteria, which will help to quantify if monies are being well spent. The Leader gave his assurance that future reports would come to scrutiny on this, including looking at what was working well so that lessons could be learned for the future.

Members sought assurance that there was confidence that the pace of spend would be increased sufficiently to avoid an underspend and noted the Leader's response that his confidence is reasonably high, based on Cardiff's good track record of spending to time, and the recognition regionally of the need to increase the pace of spend.

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded from the meeting at this point during consideration of this item as the Committee discussed exempt information of the description contained in paragraph 14 of Part 4 and paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The public may be excluded from the meeting by resolution of the Committee pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of this item.

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.

70 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

There were none.

71 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27th February 2024 at 3pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.35 pm.