
STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Fair Funding & Core Cities

I was proud to speak at an event outside City Hall on 9 September 2017 in support of the Fair Funding for Wales campaign. The most recent Welsh Government figures indicate that Wales is underfunded by approximately £1.2 billion per annum. With Cardiff Council facing a funding gap in the region of £75 million over the next three years, it is critical that Wales receives the funding it is due from UK Government, so that as a Council we can deliver the vital services that Cardiff citizens rely on.

In furtherance of this issue, on 12 September 2017, I attended the launch of the Core Cities Green Paper '*Invest – Trust – Reform, Core Cities UK's Vision for a Stronger, Fairer Britain*' at the House of Commons, joining city leaders from across the UK. The paper calls on the UK Government to invest in cities and their infrastructure, reform delivery arrangements by devolving powers to cities and introducing place-based policy.

On 9 October 2017, I am looking forward to welcoming the Core Cities Cabinet back to Cardiff, when the focus of the discussions will be on how cities can help solve the UK's housing crisis.

City Deal

Last week, the first major investment arising from the City Deal was concluded – a £38m deal to develop the Cardiff Capital Region as a major cluster for firms developing compound semiconductors. The deal aims to attract £375m in private investment, create around 500 jobs directly with the potential for a further 2,000 indirect jobs within the region. The Cardiff Capital Region hopes to become the next European semiconductor cluster alongside Eindhoven, Leuven, Grenoble and Dresden, with the aim of surpassing the existing clusters to become a world leader in producing compound materials.

This deal is the first investment made under the £1.2bn Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The 10 Councils will invest in and own the 'anchor' foundry in Newport which will be leased by St Mellons-based IQE plc. IQE will continue to work with scientists from Cardiff University as part of the deal. It is hoped that this deal will encourage other hi-tech firms to invest in the region as well as providing more opportunities for school-leavers to achieve well-paid and highly-skilled jobs in the Cardiff Capital region.

More widely, leaders are now considering the city deal business plan that needs to be approved by each council to satisfy the reserve matter in order to drawdown the wider city deal investment fund. The report that was considered by the Council, on 26 January 2017, makes clear that the business plan: *“will be developed outlining an indicative investment programme against the key programme themes and agreed strategic projects. This document is required for local authorities to understand the detail of their financial commitment.”*

This is a complex process and inevitably there are differing views about the shape and structure of the plan. In terms of Cardiff, I am keen to promote the development of a package of complementary economic development and infrastructure interventions, based on projects that will have the largest, demonstrable economic impact on the Valleys, as well as Cardiff. We need to demonstrate beyond doubt to local communities a collective commitment to bringing about a step-change in the performance of the city-region economy.

I will keep members informed as the process unfolds over coming months.

‘Work Welsh’ Programme

The Council is fully committed to the Welsh Language. As a Council we have always supported our staff to attend Welsh language training, so I am pleased that we have registered for the National Centre for Learning Welsh’s new programme – ‘Work Welsh’. This is designed to support and deliver Welsh language training for officers and Members by offering fully-funded training to everyone, from beginners to fluent Welsh speakers.

Different courses are available which are flexible enough to accommodate the work pressures of participants. Officers are already taking advantage of the intensive Welsh language course which takes beginners to advanced Welsh level in 24 weeks. Members also recently attended a Welsh language awareness training session which will be rolled-out for all our Operational Managers over the coming months. In addition, a new 10-hour online Welsh greeting course has been made available to all staff and Members. For intermediate and advanced speakers residential courses are also available to increase their confidence when using Welsh in the workplace.

Welsh Language Translation Services

The Council’s Bilingual Cardiff team recently won a tender worth up to £170,000 per annum to provide translation services for three years to the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Last year, Bilingual Cardiff translated 8.3 million words and received 12,000 requests, and provided translation services for a number of external organisations such as Bridgend and Newport Councils. With an increasing number of organisations now subject to the Welsh language standards, offering translations services to external bodies provides an opportunity for us to bring in additional revenue for the Council.

Public Services Board

In June 2017, I chaired my first meeting of the Public Services Board (PSB). Many of the major challenges facing the city’s public services cannot be responded to by one organisation acting alone. Issues like supporting the city’s most vulnerable

children and families, keeping our communities safe, helping people into work or managing the public sector estate fundamentally require close partnership working with barriers broken down between organisations, particularly at a local level. The Cardiff PSB brings together decision-makers from across the city's public services to lead this programme of partnership working.

The Board is required to publish its first Well-being Plan by May 2018. In June, the Board approved draft Well-being Objectives to be submitted to the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner. These include:

1. A Capital City that Works for Wales
2. Cardiff's Population Growth is managed in a Resilient Way
3. Safe, Confident and Empowered Communities
4. Cardiff is a great place to grow up
5. Supporting people out of poverty
6. Cardiff is a great place to grow older
7. Modernising and Integrating Our Public Services

Over the summer a series of actions have been developed by the Board for each of the above priorities, and a draft of the Well-being Plan will be released for a 3-month consultation from early October. I would urge all councillors to engage in shaping this important plan.

Staff Engagement

Delivering our ambitions will rely on the hard work and dedication of our staff. Over the summer I have been out with Cabinet Members to meet with staff at Lamby Way, Willcox House and the Castle nursery where I've seen the dedication and determination of our staff first-hand. The Council is an incredibly diverse organisation, but it is clear to me that while the work many teams undertake does vary a great deal in nature, they share a common commitment of working for Cardiff. It's a source of great pride for me to lead an organisation that does such great work day in day out for the people of our city, and it's why I'm committed to making sure that we, as a Cabinet, continue to regularly talk with and listen to our staff, beginning with a staff conference in October focussed on delivering Capital Ambition.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
27 September 2017