
STATEMENT OF THE LEADER

Core Cities Cabinet

On 9 October Cardiff hosted the Core Cities Cabinet, which brought together the Leaders and Mayors of the UK's ten largest cities outside London.

The Core City Cabinet was joined by Lord Andrew Adonis, chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, prior to the launch of the National Infrastructure Assessment. The National Infrastructure Commission argues that the current state of the country's infrastructure could hold the UK back and that a long-term plan is needed to ensure that it is fit for the future. The report makes clear the challenge of congestion on roads, limited railway capacity, slower mobile and broadband connections and ever-worsening air quality facing all UK cities.

These challenges of Congestion, Capacity and Carbon are well understood and it is why the Core Cities Cabinet signed The Clean Air Statement. A quarter of the UK's most polluted roads are either in our cities or in their surrounding areas. Core Cities believe that the Government's Air Quality Plan- published earlier this year- is not sufficient to address the current health challenges facing the public and lacks the resources local Councils need to make a difference. The Statement calls on the UK Government to incentivise the take-up of low emission and electric vehicles and for a memorandum of understanding on how local and national government can work together to tackle poor air quality. With the Director for Public Health in Cardiff recently estimating that air pollution is responsible for 5% of all deaths in the city – approximately 143 deaths a year with many of the areas most affected being in the inner city and in more deprived communities - this is an issue where strategic collaboration with our city partners in developing and deploying solutions can bring great value.

Recognising the national housing crisis the Core Cities also held a housing summit to consider how cities could deliver more, and more affordable, housing. Core Cities are currently exploring innovative housing delivery vehicles and are opening up a conversation with Government, asking for the freedom and flexibilities to deliver more housing in the face of this national crisis.

Great Western Cities

I met with fellow Leaders of the Great Western Cities initiative- Cllr Debbie Wilcox, leader of Newport and Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol- to discuss investment in the strategic infrastructure which serves the West of Britain. We are determined to attract the same level of strategic investment to the Western corridor as is being

pursued in other areas of Britain, most notably through the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine, including working with Government, Network Rail and operators to reduce the journey times between Cardiff and Bristol and to enable direct Western rail access to Heathrow Airport.

City Deal

Members will be aware that, as part of signing up to the City Deal in January, Council would receive further detail on how City Deal funding would be allocated. Since that time the Programme Management Office that has been established and is working on bringing forward further detail to discharge this matter, based upon the themes identified in the Heads of Terms document. I am clear that the City Deal must provide clarity and detail on the investment that will take place before I can commit to bringing it to this Council for approval. To that end, work is being undertaken to identify specific strategic projects, as well as the level of funding requirement.

As part of the City Deal arrangements we have also committed to establishing a Regional Economic Growth Partnership which will advise the Regional Cabinet on investment decisions and its economic strategy. I have been leading on these arrangements, and the role of Chair of the partnership has recently been advertised. Applications have since been received and we hope to make an announcement shortly on the new Chair.

Well-Being Plan

Delivering Capital Ambition requires partnership working, particularly with our Public Service and third sector partners. As Chair of the Public Services Board, I am therefore pleased that a number of our delivery priorities were contained in Cardiff's draft Well-Being Plan. The Plan was agreed for consultation by the Cardiff Public Service Board on the 29th of September, with the consultation running until the 5th of January 2018. This Plan is an important pointer to how the city's major public service delivery partners will come together to tackle some of the difficult challenges we face over the next 5 years and I would urge you all to respond.

Volvo Ocean Race

Last weekend I attended the start of the 2017/18 edition of the Volvo Ocean Race in Alicante, Spain. In 2013 the Council- along with bid partners Welsh Government and Associated British Ports- applied to host a leg of the race. Thanks to the effort and commitment of those partners, Cardiff will be hosting the prestigious transatlantic leg when the seven teams depart from Newport Rhode Island on 20 May 2018 and arrive in Cardiff on 27/28 May 2018. The Volvo Ocean Race will further our reputation as a front ranking destination for sport and culture, provide an opportunity for Cardiff to promote its rich maritime heritage and ensures the capital continues to play its role in connecting Wales with the world.

Kick Start: Cardiff

I was honoured to be asked to close the three-day international conference for creative entrepreneurship 'Kick Start: Cardiff' last week, arranged by Visiting Arts. It brought together over 30 artists and creative entrepreneurs from Wales and from as far afield as India and Cambodia. The event again exemplified Cardiff's

role in providing an international stage for the best Welsh talent, and in bringing the best international talent to Wales. The event coincided with a number of other events in the city, such as the Swn festival and 'Made in Roath', where art comes out of the gallery and into the community. The creative sector is important for Cardiff and the city was chosen to host this event because of its strong creative industry presence, particularly in music, TV and film.

Veg Cities

On Tuesday I spoke at the Vegetable Summit organised by the Peas Please initiative with Food Cardiff. In the UK, our diets now pose one of the greatest threats to our health and well-being, and is a leading cause of health inequality. One of this administration's top priorities is to address inequality in the city, which takes many forms. Nowhere, however, is it as stark as the healthy life expectancy gap of over 22 years between our richest and poorest communities. There is an overwhelming consensus that simply eating more fruit and vegetables can help improve health outcomes.

This pledge commits the Council to promoting healthy eating, because it is the cornerstone of happy and healthy lives. To support adults, we are pledging to encourage everyone eating a main meal at our staff canteens, or at one of our flagship venues, to eat two portions of vegetables. We have also pledged to continue to roll-out our award-winning School Holiday Enrichment Programme- 'Food and Fun'- to ensure children are informed about the food they eat. In 2015 Cardiff achieved bronze status as a sustainable food city and this Pledge will support our bid to become one of a handful of Silver Sustainable Food Cities.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
26 October 2017