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**CULTURE AND LEISURE STATEMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM: 12**

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**Parks**

I am very pleased to advise that the Council's Parks Service has been shortlisted as a finalist in the Association for Public Service Excellence – Best Performer of the Year Award for Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services. The Service has been placed in the top five of fifty - five benchmarking authorities and against a range of cost, customer, quality, environmental and operational performance indicators. An awards event will take place in early December.

I am also delighted to advise that as a result of a public vote, Roath Park has been shortlisted for the UK's Best Park Award 2017. Fields in Trust, formerly the National Playing Fields Association, administer this award and the winner will be announced this evening at an event in London.

Earlier this week I was delighted to mark the Tree Council's National Tree Planting Week in my own ward of Caerau. This event has been running for over forty years, this year running from 25 November to 3 December 2017. As part of this year's celebration the Council will be working with partners which include Cardiff Civic Society through their Tree Canopy Project, Trees for Cities and our network of community groups to plant in excess of 150 new and replacement trees. Such initiatives are vitally important ensuring that the vitality of our tree stock, which brings a range of important benefits to the city and its citizens, is maintained.

On Saturday 25 November in Bute Park, an event hosted by the Lord Mayor celebrated the Council's commitment to The Tree Charter, an initiative led by the Woodland Trust. The Charter recognises the importance of trees in sustaining landscapes rich in wildlife, greening and strengthening our landscapes and mitigating threats such as climate change. Cardiff is very well blessed with trees, particularly in Bute Park, which benefits from the highest number of champion trees, those defined as the tallest and broadest of their species, in the United Kingdom. The event saw the unveiling of a carved totem pole as a commitment to the charter.

At a Welsh Hospitality Awards event earlier in the month, the Cardiff International White Water Rafting Team was successful in winning the Best Entertainment Team category award. The Welsh Hospitality awards are the annual celebration of the best in Welsh dining, catering, venues and entertainment from across the principality. The awards bring together a diverse range of venues dedicated to delivering outstanding service and products to the customer. The award demonstrates the quality of service and teamwork, and reflects well on staff and the Council as a whole.

## **Events**

I do not believe that Members can be in any doubt that Christmas has arrived in Cardiff. Launched with our annual Step into Christmas event on the 9 November, our capital city has undergone yet another sparkling transformation. Over 120,000 people joined us to enjoy this special evening, an increase of 6% on last year, and we have even more festive offerings to tempt residents and visitors alike into our city over coming weeks. This includes a Christmas Market consisting of over 200 talented artist, craft, food and alcohol producers from across Wales; the opportunity to meet Santa in Cardiff Castle; a choice of three classic and timeless Christmas ballets in St David's Hall performed by the Russian State Ballet & Orchestra of Siberia; or the sheer magic of the New Theatre's Pantomime – Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Winter Wonderland is offering an even larger rink under a starlit roof, a giant wheel and authentic Alpine Village and cosy Bierkeller. The first outdoor rink in the UK to receive Access Accreditation, this annual attraction is now widely acknowledged as one of Europe's best outdoor ice rinks.

Amongst all the preparations for Christmas, the Council once again facilitated the arrangements for the National Remembrance Service for Wales, which was a moment for us all to stop and join the rest of the UK in reflection and to remember our fallen heroes. I would like to thank all those Members and Officers who attended and to thank them for their support and to thank the officers of both the Welsh Government and the Council's Protocol Team for their hard work in preparing and delivering this important annual service.

Finally, I am delighted to advise Members that the Cardiff Story Museum Manager has been invited to speak about the Museum's award-winning community outreach and engagement work at the Engage International Conference at the end of this month. The conference takes place in Hull, UK City of Culture. It will draw together arts and educational professionals from across the world and will explore the theme of equality, diversity and access. I am delighted that the work of the Cardiff Story has been recognised in this way and that the Council has the opportunity to share our experience and knowledge with colleagues from around the world.

**Councillor Peter Bradbury**  
**Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure**  
**29 November 2017**