

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 MAY 2019

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

73 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sattar.

74 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

75 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

76 : CARDIFF HARBOUR AUTHORITY: WELSH GOVERNMENT REVIEW

The Chairperson advised that this item gives Members the opportunity to consider the emerging findings of the most recent review on the Harbour Authority arrangements and to pass on Committee's comments, observations and any recommendations to Cabinet.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Peter Bradbury (Cabinet Member – Culture & Leisure), Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development) and Jon Maidment (Operational Manager – Cardiff Harbour Authority) as well as Howel Jones, from Local Partnerships, who undertook the review. Mark Williams from Welsh Government has given his apologies and has said he will make himself available should Committee like him to attend a subsequent meeting and that he is happy to respond to any written queries in the meantime.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Bradbury to make a statement in which he said that this work was initiated by the Welsh Government to determine whether money spent on the Cardiff Harbour Authority is efficient. Cardiff Council's view is that it is, statutory guidelines have been adhered to, and savings are found where possible and statutory duties are carried out. Cardiff Council has cooperated with Welsh Government throughout the process.

Members were provided with a presentation by Howel Jones after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked why funding had been changed from 3 yearly to annual and were advised that yearly extensions were given until the review was undertaken. The Cabinet Member stated that they would always want a 3 year settlement.

Members requested that there would be no change to the fish pass and asked if consideration had been given to stopping the barrage altogether. The Cabinet Member stated that the review was being undertaken to make sure Cardiff is meeting the statutory requirements of the Act; Local Partnerships were asked by the Welsh Government to undertake the review to ensure Cardiff is performing its duties and providing value for money to the tax payer. The wider environmental issues would require Westminster and Welsh Government to repeal the Act and that is not in the remit of this committee. Members were advised that there was no suggestion of stopping the fish pass, but information gathered shows times when the fish pass is not used so to save energy the fish pass could be operated more intelligently.

Members asked if part of the review's remit was to talk to users of the harbour authority regarding income generation, business interests and costs. Members were advised that they hadn't been spoken to for the review but their previous reviews had been reflected upon.

Members referred to Asset plans for the Bay and noted that the Task and Finish Inquiry undertaken in 2010 had touched on the Graving Docks; Members asked if this was considered an asset. Members were informed that yes it was and it was a specialist area, it was important to determine what the best use could be made of the Graving Docks.

Members noted the contingency fund now being only £40k and asked if there was any merit in not having a contingency fund and revisiting the agreement so that liability is shared if something happens. Members were advised that this may well be something that happens in the future.

Members referred to funding being transferred to Cardiff Council and asked if there were risks associated to this. The Cabinet Member said there were pros and cons; the control of the asset management plan would be useful but there would be concerns, the grant would need to be transferred for a number of years and not top sliced each year. There had been cuts of 66.2% and Cardiff was still meeting its statutory requirements under extreme financial pressures. The Cabinet Member stated that he would have liked a civil servant from Welsh Government to be at the meeting to have some answers as to where the funding sits. It was clarified that the reason there was no Welsh Government representative in attendance was that the report was not yet final. Officers added that asset renewal was a critical area, the infrastructure is unique but ageing, it needs to be assessed and inform the capital programme going forward.

Members asked if a condition survey had been undertaken and were advised that one had been done internally but external help was needed to help develop a brief to go to market.

Members asked if any work had been done on drawing out expenses such as service level agreements and whether there had been any benchmarking undertaken on service level agreements. Officers advised that no benchmarking as such had been done but there was a level of due diligence that officers would look at i.e. Cleansing over a number of departments.

Members referred to the dissolved oxygen KPI, recognising that 100% was impossible to achieve and asked what would be achievable and what savings could be made. Officers advised that this was unclear at this time and there was a need to discuss this in detail and determine a level with Natural Resources Wales. Members asked that if the level is reduced then the operators are asked for input too.

Members asked if there was an appetite for the transfer of funding, the Cabinet Member said it would depend how it was funded, he would not want a battle every year, there would be pros with asset renewal but clarity was needed on the funding arrangements. He added that he hoped the report showed that Cardiff provides excellent services and this needs to be recognised.

Members asked if there was scope for more sport and water activities in the Bay. Officers advised that they are currently looking at opportunities to increase footfall for this summer and diversifying the offer.

Members asked about the timeline for agreeing the report and were advised that there was no specific timeline, but the report would be completed asap; final information was needed, checks for factual accuracy would be undertaken and the final report would be ready in a matter of weeks.

RESOLVED: that the views of the Committee would be discussed during the way forward section of the meeting and a letter sent to the Cabinet Member in due course.

77 : DUMBALLS ROAD REGENERATION: UPDATE

The Chairperson advised Members that they would recall the update on the Dumballs Road regeneration scheme that they received in October 2018, with a presentation from Vastint taking them through their initial master-planning ideas. This report to Cabinet sets out the next steps and proposed timeline and seeks delegated authority with regards to negotiations to agree Heads of Terms for disposal of Council land.

The Chairperson welcomed Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development) and Chris Barnett (Project Manager) to the meeting. Councillor Goodway had given his apologies for the meeting.

The Chairperson invited Neil Hanratty to make a statement in which he said that this was a paving report, no significant decision had been made as yet, and this was an update from the previous report from Vastint. The site was now around 40 acres, it was semi derelict brownfield site and was a strategic site in the LDP and important to the Council in terms of its position and the ability to link the city centre and the bay. The intention was to deliver a mixed use urban village including 450 council owned units distributed across the site. The report provides an update on the commitments to seek authority to agree heads of terms. There were some challenges such as ongoing land assembly, 1 business still needed to be relocated and some title issues ongoing with the developer. With regards to timeline, this was scheduled for Planning in 2020 with construction starting in summer 2021.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members noted that the delegation in the report was to Economic Development and asked if there was scope to involve the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities in the decision making process. Members were advised that legal advice had stated that this stage of the process was for the Cabinet Member for Investment and Development, at a later stage it would be Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities.

Members asked if it was still the intention to have work space units for the creative industries and were advised that the intention was mixed use that was residential led. There would be opportunities for lots of use especially on ground floor level, including employment, cultural, leisure and office opportunity. There was a need to meet the LDP aspirations.

Members referred to the 1 business that needs to be relocated and asked for more information. Officers advised that the business was Biffa and a site had been identified at Lamby Way but there were issues with the costs and the grandfather rights on the site that were being worked through currently.

Members referred to the costs of managing vacant land etc. and asked how these were being met. Officers advised that all costs were being met by Vastint and there was no call on the Council budget for meanwhile use of land. Vastint want full contract and full title on the whole area.

RESOLVED: that the views of the Committee would be discussed during the way forward section of the meeting and a letter sent to the Cabinet Member in due course.

78 : CABINET RESPONSE: WORKSHOPS & INNOVATION INQUIRY

The Chairperson advised Members that this item enabled Committee to receive the Cabinet response, agreed at their meeting in April, to the Inquiry into the Council's Workshops and Innovation Premises. Out of 9 recommendations, the Cabinet has agreed to 6 recommendations and partially agreed to 3.

The Chairperson welcomed Neil Hanratty (Director – Economic Development) and Jon Day (Operational Manager - Economic Policy) to the meeting.

Officers advised Members that even those recommendations that were partially accepted were very much welcomed, there was just a matter of caveats in how these are carried out especially with the public sector.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members considered that the Council needs to decide what its role is in terms of sizes of spaces, currently there are a range of smaller units and the strategy could improve some and dispose of others. Members wondered whether the Council's role is to get them into private sector medium or even large units, or whether the Council has a small stock of that and that the response wasn't clear on the Council's position on this. Officers advised that there would always be a mixture, the Council would never be able to be the sole provider of the spaces; the report had looked at CBTC and the role of innovation and provision of small workshop space within that context.

There are Grow-On spaces and at Willowbrook there are significantly larger units too. There could always be more and a review will look at the workshop estate. A range of potential options and different types were being considered.

Members referred to recommendation 7 and noted that people need detailed local advice and knowledge and asked if Cardiff Council have the resource to provide this. Officers advised that there have been significant cuts in the initiatives budget which would include business advice. There is still an active role played by Economic Development in the property side, but for specific business advice, the Council's main role would be to signpost, as the majority of advice is available from others either directly or from grants.

RESOLVED: to note the Cabinet Response and receive a progress report in the implementation of agreed recommendations in 12 month's time.

79 : ANNUAL REPORT

Members were advised that this report seeks Committee's approval of the Committee's draft Annual Report 2018/19, prior to its presentation to Council.

The report lists all items considered from June 2018 – May 2019, and provides examples of the various types of scrutiny undertaken. The report concludes by setting out topics that the Committee has indicated a future scrutiny committee may like to include in its 2019-20 work programme.

Members were asked to consider the draft Annual Plan and suggest any amendments required.

Members noted that all future meetings would be webcast therefore statistics on webcast hits could be included in the Annual Report.

Members considered there could reference to Environmental Impact Assessments and the recently agreed Climate Change Emergency in the report and how the work of the Committee in 2018/19 has referenced the need for sustainable development. Members were advised that Environmental Scrutiny will be looking at the Climate Change Emergency issue and the findings can be shared with Committee. Members were advised this was something they as individuals could bear in mind when scrutinising issues as they would with equality.

RESOLVED: to approve the report for presentation to Council, scheduled for June 2019.

80 : CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Noted.

81 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

82 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee is scheduled for Thursday 6th June 2019 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 4, County Hall, Cardiff.

The meeting terminated at 5.50 pm