
INVESTMENT & DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT

International Arena

Councillors will be aware that Cabinet, at its meeting on 23 September 2021, received the Full Business Case relating to the proposed Indoor Arena in Butetown and confirmed the consortium led by Live Nation, as the preferred bidder. I am sure that Councillors will be reassured that the business case demonstrates that the project can be delivered within the agreed funding envelope and will welcome the progress that has been made in bringing the project to this stage. It will undoubtedly deliver a clear signal of continued business confidence in the city and its economy.

The Leader and I, together with our officials, met with the senior leaders of the consortium when they visited Cardiff on 16 September. We were encouraged by the degree of confidence they have in the Cardiff project and were reassured to learn that they are taking forward arena developments in the USA, the Middle East and elsewhere.

The Council will now enter into a Development Finance Agreement with the successful bidder to enable a planning application to be submitted in October 2021. Detailed designs will be developed in anticipation of the construction and I will ensure that the comments made by the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee regarding the design are taken into account.

I can confirm that, in principle, all of the relevant contracts are now agreed and will be signed once planning permission is granted and all other conditions placed upon the developer are met without the need to refer back to Cabinet or to Council.

It is anticipated that financial close will occur in the spring of 2022 and for work to start on site shortly afterwards.

International Sports Village

Councillors will be aware that this development has been the cause of considerable frustration to successive Administrations since the project was first conceived in 1999. However, I trust that Members will welcome this Administration's commitment to take control of the development in order to deliver on its ambitions and to support residents that have been adversely affected by the delay in taking the development forward.

Councillors will be aware that Cabinet, at its meeting on 23 September 2021, resolved to acquire some ten acres of land on the peninsular site which will enable the Council

to terminate the previous Development Agreement with Greenbank Partnership Ltd and to progress the completion of the wider development of the site.

The Cabinet decision effectively gives the Council full control over all of the land on the development site which will allow the Council to work on the basis that any future sales will require a commitment to develop and deliver expeditiously and ensure that no land banking activity can take place. I trust that this will provide some comfort to the residents who have been adversely impacted by previous developer's lack of progress.

With regard to the operation of the leisure facilities, the intention is to seek a single operator in a bid to establish the site as a single marketable leisure destination.

City Centre and Economic Recovery

Councillors will be aware that, despite the relaxation of some of the Covid-19 restrictions, the national economy is yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels. The Council has been working with businesses and with workers to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, as well as to help businesses deal with recruitment pressures faced by some sectors.

The Council's Into Work Service is continuing its employment support work, which now includes working directly with sectors facing job shortages to link them with job seekers in Cardiff.

The Council also continues to work with businesses in the city and the city centre to provide support, including our support for grassroots music venues through the "Live and Unlocked" events that saw ticket revenues go directly to the city's venues and artists.

The Council's work in the city centre has also seen a greater return of footfall compared to other UK cities, with footfall in August 2021 just 5% down on the same period in 2019. This compares with the regional UK city average of 27% and a UK wide figure of 23%. It is worth noting that in August there were periods where footfall exceeded that of the equivalent period two years ago, and with the return of major events later this year we expect to see continued growth in visitor numbers.

The Economic Development Team continues to provide direct support to businesses who remain affected by the pandemic restrictions, with some £1million of additional support provided in the last month.

Councillor Russell Goodway
Cabinet Member for Investment & Development
23 September 2021