

CITY CENTRE RECOVERY ACTION PLAN: PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide background information to Members to aid their scrutiny of the draft report to Cabinet titled '*City Centre Recovery Action Plan*', attached at **Appendix A**, which is due to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 20 January 2022.

Scope of Scrutiny

2. At their meeting on 20 January 2022, the Cabinet will consider an action plan that brings together and promotes key initiatives and projects for the city centre that the Council and partners will work towards over the next five years.
3. During this scrutiny, Members can explore:
 - i) The proposed City Centre Recovery Action Plan
 - ii) The proposed approach for implementing the Action Plan
 - iii) The proposed approach to monitoring implementation of the Action Plan
 - iv) The proposed approach to reviewing the Action Plan
 - v) Whether there are any financial implications for the Council
 - vi) Whether there are any risks to the Council
 - vii) The timeline and next steps for delivering the City Centre Recovery Action Plan
 - viii) The recommendations to Cabinet.

Background

4. In December 2021, Cabinet agreed the '*Greener, Fairer, Stronger City Recovery and Renewal Strategy*', which seeks to respond to the post pandemic needs of the city.
5. The Strategy includes *Key Mission 1: Reimagine the City Centre*. Cardiff City Centre accounts for circa 70,000 jobs, employing residents and commuters from across the region. The Strategy argues the city centre affords opportunities to support a more productive and sustainable economic recovery, and outlines the following key priorities for the mission:
 - *'Make sure our city centre is safe, clean, welcoming, and attractive for people of all ages and backgrounds.*
 - *Accelerate the completion of the central business district to support continued jobs growth.*
 - *Support existing businesses to grow and become more productive.*
 - *Improve existing - and establish new – public squares, streets, green spaces, and open up our waterfront.*
 - *Take a more direct role in managing the future of the city centre to reflect the needs of residents, workers, businesses, and visitors.*
 - *Put culture and arts at the centre of the recovery, embracing the role the sector plays in shaping our city centre.*
 - *Create a city centre that is fully accessible to all ages and people of disabilities, underpinned by a fully integrated transport system.'*
6. The draft report to Cabinet entitled '*City Centre Recovery Action Plan*' is attached at **Appendix A** and has **one** appendix:
 - **Appendix 1** – City Centre Recovery Action Plan.
7. The report to Cabinet states that the *City Centre Recovery Action Plan*, attached at **Appendix 1**, sets out how Key Mission 1 will be delivered.

Issues identified in the Cabinet Report

8. At **point 9**, the report to Cabinet highlights the key role of Cardiff City Centre to residents, visitors, businesses, and Wales as a whole, namely:
 - i. Crucial to our identity – it matters to residents, and it provides meeting and socialisation space for residents, visitors, and businesses.
 - ii. Essential to Climate Emergency response - as the most accessible location in the city, the focus of public transport and active travel networks, it supports the most efficient low carbon focus of the city.

- iii. Essential to business – as a location, a place for meetings and interaction, and as a key source of brand recognition.
- iv. Provides Wales's best opportunity to address productivity gap. Increased hybrid working is both an opportunity and threat. Dr Tim Williams recent work identifies that smaller cities such as Cardiff could benefit from a move away from the world's megacities.

9. **Point 11** of the report to Cabinet sets out that there are nine key themes to the action plan, which respond to the priorities set for Key Mission 1 in the Recovery Strategy. The nine key themes are:

- i) A Fully Curated City Centre – clean, safe, attractive, well managed for all
- ii) A Dynamic Business and Employment Hub
- iii) A World Class Transport Network
- iv) A City Centre of World Class Urban Design and Public Realm
- v) A Green and Biodiverse City Centre
- vi) A Blue City Centre of Rivers and Canals
- vii) A Great Inclusive Place to Live and Play
- viii) A City Centre of Culture and Animation
- ix) A Great Quality Experience for Visitors.

10. The report to Cabinet states, at **point 11**, that the '*action plan does not seek to replicate existing work, but rather bring about improvements in the way the city centre operates both now and in the future, by bringing together the range of city centre activities into a single five-year plan.*'

11. **Point 12** of the report to Cabinet highlights the need to establish a stable and robust funding regime and that this will need to be considered in the context of wider corporate and directorate commitments, the need for value for money services, and robust business planning. The report to Cabinet highlights previous success in working in partnership with private, voluntary, and other public sector organisations on city transformation projects such as St David's Centre and the Principality Stadium. Please see point 13, below, for further financial implications information.

Consultation

12. **Point 15** of the report to Cabinet summarises the findings of the Engagement exercise undertaken over Summer 2021 and states this has been incorporated into the preparation of the City Centre Recovery Action Plan.

13. Financial Implications are set out at **Point 18** and highlight:

- i) where funding for initiatives in the Action Plan has not been identified, the development of robust business cases will need to be considered prior to implementation, and to assist the Council budget setting process for 2022/23.
- ii) If funding gaps are identified, consideration should be given to the likelihood of successfully obtaining external funding and the timing of costs incurred
- iii) If costs go beyond 2022/23, they should be contained and considered in the Medium Financial Plan and the overall strategy for financial resilience
- iv) Robust risk registers should be held at the appropriate level with regular review to ensure risks remain appropriate and mitigations are in place and developed.

14. Legal Implications are set out at **Points 19-34** and include:

- i) Legal Advice should be obtained on each scheme and initiative prior to being implemented
- ii) That it is necessary to follow appropriate statutory processes for any of these schemes or initiatives that depend on the making of orders or obtaining of consents
- iii) It is important all feedback has been duly considered
- iv) That the delegation to the Directors of Economic Development and Planning, Transport and Environment is a wide delegation
- v) That the Council must comply with Contract Standing Orders and Procurement rules and procurement legislation
- vi) That decision maker needs to be satisfied the proposals can be achieved within the budgetary and policy framework
- vii) That the Council must satisfy its duties under the Equalities Act 2010, public sector duties, Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards, and Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including sustainable development principle

- viii) That an Equalities Impact Assessment should be carried out and the decision maker have due regard to this when making its decision.

15. **HR Implications** are set out at **Point 35** and state that there are no direct HR implications from the report and action plan.

16. **Property Implications** are set out at **Point 36** and state that there are no direct property implications from the report and that it is important to understand the significant impact property may have either to deliver or support the delivery of the City Centre Recovery Action Plan. As such, the report states that any proposals requiring the use of Council assets or property transactions should be undertaken in consultation with Strategic Estates.

Proposed Recommendations to Cabinet

17. The report to Cabinet contains the following recommendations:

- i) *'approve in principle the City Centre Recovery Action Plan: and*
- ii) *delegate decisions to the Director of Economic Development and the Director of Planning, Transport & Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member Investment and Development, Cabinet Member Strategic Planning and Transport, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation and Performance, s.151 Officer and Director Governance and Legal Services to bring together and promote key initiatives and programmes that the Council and partners will work towards over the next five years, subject to any proposals being within the budget and policy framework.'*

Overview of City Centre Recovery Action Plan

18. The proposed City Centre Recovery Action Plan is attached at **Appendix 1** of the report to Cabinet. **Page 6** sets out the key trends shaping renewal, including:

- i) Successful city centres are great destinations – people want to be there

- ii) Curation and partnership management - of the city centre is important
- iii) New work/ life balance – growth in hybrid agile working, need for flexible space and travel
- iv) Events and Outside Spaces – creating experiences that bring people back together
- v) The Local Rediscovered – City Centre needs to work in tandem with 15-minute neighbourhoods
- vi) Climate Emergency – make city centre more resilient and contribute to making Cardiff carbon neutral
- vii) Fundamental Public Equality – city centres need to engage and welcome all ages and abilities
- viii) Active Travel and Public Transport – reassert role of pedestrian and cycling environment.

19. **Page 8** of Appendix 1 provides brief details of work in city centres in Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and Nottingham, citing these as UK exemplars.

20. **Pages 12 – 28** are set out by the nine key themes and include the following ‘We Will’ actions:

- i) A Fully Curated City Centre – We will:
 1. Establish effective curation/management resources. Take a more direct role in proactively managing and coordinating the future of the city centre to reflect the needs of residents, workers, businesses and visitors.
 2. Establish effective partnerships with the Business Improvement District and key partners including residents.
 3. Make the city centre clean, safe, green and well maintained a core priority.
 4. Develop a clear five-year plan and vision for the city centre to coordinate:
 - Public, open and green spaces,
 - Events, markets and street animation into a year-round programme,
 - City centre marketing and branding,
 - All licensing regimes.
 5. Create an integrated city centre funding programme to support the key actions in this plan.
 6. Work with community safety partners to make the city centre feel safer for families, women and visitors.
 7. Establish high quality design standards for shop frontages, public spaces, street furniture and all aspects of the environment.

ii) **A Dynamic Business and Employment Hub – We Will:**

1. Create a world class destination business city centre, with a selection of high quality, sustainable, innovative and flexible office and co-working spaces that attract and grow knowledge-based businesses.
2. Develop proposals for meanwhile uses and incubation spaces, providing a dynamic approach to ensuring that empty units, retail and office spaces are used productively.
3. Support the development of more flexible and low-cost space to help indigenous and independent businesses grow and become more productive.
4. Develop a 'smart city' digital infrastructure programme.
5. Develop a business events strategy that showcases the city's competitiveness and establishes a programme of activity.
6. Seek to expand the city centre's designation to be better integrated with Cardiff Bay and key locations such as Tudor Street, James Street and Newport Road.
7. Develop proposals for and complete major developments in the 'Central Business District' (CBD), including at:
 - Central Square
 - Central Quay
 - Callaghan Square
 - The Canal Quarter
 - Cardiff Bay

iii) **A World Class Transport Network – We Will:**

1. Work with partners to complete the Central Square Transport Interchange and upgrade the Cardiff Central (Metro Central), Queens Street and Cathays railway stations, delivering high quality accessible 'gateway' entrances into the city centre.
2. Deliver plans for a new Metro tram link between the city centre and Cardiff Bay, including the provision of new station facilities at Cardiff Central and Pierhead Street, as the first phase of the development of Cardiff Crossrail. Phase 2 will then continue to Newport Road and Roath Basin.
3. Create an enlarged 'clean air' pedestrian and active travel core to the city centre to be developed alongside the new transport interchange delivery.
4. Connect the city centre with high quality segregated cycle and bus networks. Develop new 'bus hubs' in key locations at Greyfriars Road, Churchill Way and Pierhead Street.
5. Integrate high quality visitor services and tourist information into new transport facilities, including the Transport Interchange and Metro Central.
6. Develop a new city centre taxi/loading/parking masterplan.
7. Open up access to and the use of the River Taff as a transport corridor, including developing proposals for three new walking/cycling bridge crossings at Central Quay, The Embankment and Channel View to improve integration with nearby residential areas.
8. Make Cardiff an exemplar for zero carbon transport including electric vehicle (EV) charging and EV public transport throughout the city centre.

- iv) **A City Centre of World Class Urban Design and Public Realm – We Will:**
1. Prepare a streetscape design guide for the city centre, consolidating and updating existing guidance to ensure that new and existing streets, spaces and buildings are developed to high quality architecture, landscape and biodiversity standards.
 2. Develop a programme of streetscape enhancements to upgrade and declutter, creating streets and spaces that are safer, more attractive and more accessible for all users.
 3. Encourage commercial premises to upgrade building/shop frontages and to raise design standards, focusing on historic buildings and Conservation Areas (e.g. Castle Street frontages).
 4. Regenerate Cardiff Market as a great destination linked to the network of historic arcades.
 5. Create a new Capital City High Street with an enhanced public realm, including greening, art, wayfinding and amenity spaces, following the historic central 'spine' from Cardiff Castle, through High Street/St Mary Street, Callaghan Square and Lloyd George Avenue, terminating at Cardiff Bay and the Docks.
 6. Develop proposals for new landmark squares and public spaces at the Canal Quarter, Callaghan Square, Central Quay, University/ Cultural Quarter, The Embankment, Mount Stuart Square, Boulevard de Nantes and Westgate Street.
- v) **A Green and Biodiverse City Centre – We Will:**
1. Better integrate existing major parks (Bute Park/Cathays Park) and green spaces with the core of the city centre through traffic calming measures and improved pedestrian connectivity, including through the Castle grounds and its west/ clock tower gate.
 2. Seek to keep the Castle grounds open as a public green space.
 3. Develop a green asset plan and work with partners to fully green the city centre (contributing towards Coed Caerdydd) through large scale interventions such as street greening, increased tree planting and the installation of green roofs/ walls on new/redeveloped buildings, through to smaller scale works such as the inclusion of planters in all street cafés.
 4. Work with partners and developers to deliver a network of new public green spaces across the city centre, including developing major new parks at: Callaghan Square, Lloyd George Avenue and the Taff River Embankment.
 5. Turn grey areas of impermeable paving green (and blue) through the increased provision of rain gardens/sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs) as part of a comprehensive programme of retrofitting across the city centre. Develop new landmark schemes like the award winning Greener Grangetown in the city centre, Riverside and Cathays.

vi) A Blue City Centre of Rivers and Canals – We Will:

1. Create tourism/visitor active travel trails along and around Cardiff Bay, the rivers Taff, Rhymney and Ely, Cardiff Lakes (Roath Lake and Llanishen/Lisvane Reservoirs), the Dock Feeder Canal and the Coastal Path.
2. Work with partners and developers to deliver a network of new public waterfront corridors across the city centre, including developing major new water parks at:
 - The Canal Quarter (along Churchill Way)
 - Lloyd George Avenue (returning the Bute Dock West Canal)
3. Create new river bridges at: Channel View, The Embankment (Dumballs Road), Central Quay and Ely Mill. Deliver a new multimode road bridge at Llanrumney (Ball Road). Refurbish Black Weir Bridge.
4. Explore the opportunity to create ‘continental style’ waterfront open spaces at Cardiff Bay, Channel View and Black Weir Bridge.
5. Develop a 10-year river, water and flood plan for the city centre to help ensure that it is resilient to flood risk and also maximises access to the great existing and new water opportunities across the city.

vii) A Great Inclusive Place to Live and Play – We Will:

1. Seek to provide a wider range and choice of family accommodation across the city centre/Bay with supporting facilities.
2. Establish a regular engagement partnership with residents and user groups.
3. Commit to making the city centre safer, cleaner, welcoming and more attractive for people of all ages and backgrounds.
4. Develop an equalities and all ages access strategy, supporting the city’s Age Friendly City strategy.
5. Work with the Welsh Government’s Transforming Towns programme to support in city centre regeneration schemes, street frontage improvements and public space enhancements.
6. Develop a fully child friendly city centre including the provision of play opportunities in new public spaces.
7. Create great food destinations, with high quality street markets, restaurants, cafes, shops and supporting infrastructure.
8. Develop a range of quieter seating areas and family/play spaces.

- viii) A City Centre of Culture and Animation – We Will:
1. Develop a new ‘home grown’ events strategy and place animation programme.
 2. Develop proposals for a new creative hub in the city centre to support production and performance.
 3. Develop new city centre and Bay art/cultural centres.
 4. Establish a city cultural festival, scoping a quality International Festival of Street Art.
 5. Develop Womanby Street as a new music quarter to celebrate its significance as Cardiff’s most loved music street.
 6. Establish a city centre artist in residence programme.
 7. Develop creative uses in meanwhile spaces, taking a dynamic approach to repurposing empty shops for artist activity where possible to ensure that empty spaces are used productively.
 8. Establish public spaces that can accommodate outdoor events as part of new developments.
- ix) A Great Quality Experience for Visitors – We Will:
1. Establish a clear ‘Visit Cardiff’ brand, bringing together key stakeholders such as FOR Cardiff and Visit Cardiff Network members, to ensure there is a cohesive approach to marketing and promotion through one place brand for the city.
 2. Explore the potential of a transport and attractions visitor card.
 3. Promote free access activities within the city centre such as public art and heritage trails.
 4. Progress key campaigns to help raise the profile of the city including Christmas, a waterfront city, major events and the Cardiff Music City brand.
 5. Promote the city centre’s unique assets including Cardiff Castle, Cardiff Market, its Victorian arcades and sports/cultural venues.
 6. Build on visitcardiff.com and associated social media platforms to expand digital reach.
 7. Encourage more business events of all sizes in the city centre to attract more weekday visitors and promote the city centre as a competitive business location.

Previous Scrutiny

21. This Committee undertook policy development scrutiny of the draft ‘*Greener, Fairer, Stronger City Recovery and Renewal Strategy*’, in May 2021. Following this scrutiny, the Chair, Councillor Nigel Howells, wrote to Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader, noting some of the points made at the meeting and stating that

Committee was pleased consultation would be used to finesse the final strategy. This letter is attached in full at **Appendix B**. The recommendation regarding including the Wales Coastal Path in the Strategy was accepted.

22. This Committee received an update on the findings of the Engagement Exercise, in November 2021. Following this scrutiny, the Chair, Councillor Nigel Howells, wrote to Councillor Huw Thomas, Leader, noting some of the points made at the meeting and requesting further information. This letter is attached in full at **Appendix C**, along with the response to the letter, received on 15 December 2021.

Way Forward

23. Councillor Huw Thomas (Leader) and Councillor Caro Wild (Cabinet Member – Strategic Planning and Transport) will be invited to make a statement. Andrew Gregory (Director of Planning, Transport and Environment), Michael Barnett (Principal Planner - Placemaking) and Jon Day (Operational Manager – Economic Policy & Tourism) will attend to give a presentation. The whole panel will be available to answer Members' questions.

Legal Implications

24. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review, and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

25. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review, and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Consider the information in this report, its appendices and the information presented at the meeting
- ii) Determine whether they would like to make any comments, observations, or recommendations to the Cabinet on this matter in time for its meeting on 20 January 2022, and
- iii) Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance & Legal Services

13 January 2022