

COUNCIL: 27 JANUARY 2022

CULTURE & LEISURE STATEMENT

Covid-19 Impact on Culture and Events Sector

I am sure that councillors will share my sense of devastation that our city's critical culture and events sector was, once again, forced to close its doors temporarily due to the rapid spread of the Covid-19 Omicron variant.

I want to take this opportunity to recognise all our venues, partner attractions and staff who worked so tirelessly to develop and deliver such a rich, varied and inspiring Christmas offer. It goes without saying how disappointed everyone was to have to close our attractions and performances on Christmas Eve. However, public safety was at the forefront of everyone's mind, and I want to thank and commend all of those involved for the speed, efficiency and professionalism with which this exceptional ask was managed and implemented.

Following the First Minister's announcement on 22 December 2021, St David's Hall, Winter Wonderland, Bute Park Ice Walk and the Christmas Craft Fayre all closed their Christmas offer to the public at close of business on Christmas Eve. Officers are currently working with all our Christmas venue and attraction partners to identify and access relevant support packages from the Welsh Government as appropriate.

Whilst once again closed to visitors, the Museum of Cardiff turned its attention to its excellent community programme, with the focus on promoting its new virtual learning packs for primary schools, as well as its My Museum activities on the website. Officers continue to partner with the Council's Independent Living Team to deliver monthly online reminiscence sessions and are also working on digital activities for the February Half-Term school holiday period on the theme of environmental sustainability.

Encouragingly, it appears that we have once again turned a corner with the latest variant. Dependent on our continued commitment to taking the necessary precautions that will continue to help suppress transmission, we can once again look forward to reopening our doors at the end of this month. Officers are working with venues, clients and promoters to reschedule events and performances to facilitate and encourage the sector's swift and sustainable recovery.

Christmas at Bute Park Light Trail

The Covid-19 restrictions in Wales that took effect from Boxing Day meant that the hugely popular light trail in Bute Park was closed early. Notwithstanding this, the event had been open for five weeks and attracted over 120,000 visitors, as

well as proving to be a very popular destination for residents of, and visitors to, the city. I was also pleased to see our event partner rolling out the 'Great Giveaway' initiative, which targeted individuals and families most disadvantaged by the pandemic and providing free entry to the experience. I very much look forward to seeing the return of the event later this year.

Sakura Cherry Tree Project

On 26 January 2021, I will be joining the Lord Mayor and Leader of the Council in attending tree planting ceremonies at both Heath Park and Bute Park to celebrate the friendship and co-operation between Japan and Wales. Children from local primary schools will also be involved in the planting. The Sakura Cherry Tree Project has resulted in the Council benefiting from the donation of 120 Cherry Trees through fundraising undertaken by the Japan-British Society, of which 20 will be planted in Bute Park and 100 in Heath Park. This project contributes to the Council's Coed Caerdydd project and our aim to increase tree canopy in the city. Cherry blossom is the national flower of Japan and the tree planting in both parks will provide striking features for present and future generations to enjoy.

National Park City

I'm pleased to report the progress that is being made in developing a National Park City movement for Cardiff. Following recommendations contained within the report, entitled 'Let's Make Cardiff Greener, Healthier and Wilder', that was considered by the Cabinet in May 2021, the Council supported the facilitation of a stakeholder engagement event that was designed to stimulate interest in the potential for a National Park City movement across a wide and diverse range of organisations. Expressions of interest have been sought in creating a membership and the formation of a management committee, with 80 respondents to date. It is anticipated that the first formal meeting of the management committee will take place next month. I have no doubt that, over time, the movement in Cardiff will go from strength to strength and I will be following developments with great interest.

Benches of Hope

Building on previous member involvement in the project to install three purple 'Happy to Chat' benches in Roath Park, Hailey Park and Bute Park, the Council has been working with Netflix and suicide prevention charity, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) to help raise awareness of mental health issues and to promote the new series of After Life starring Ricky Gervais. The After Life TV series highlights those struggling to cope with bereavement, loneliness and mental health issues.

As a result, Netflix has donated two 'Benches of Hope', with engraved plaques that include the quote "Hope is Everything", which are being installed this month in Victoria Park and Parc Cefn Onn. Those who visit these benches will be able to access resources from CALM via a unique QR code and also online by visiting: www.thecalmzone.net/afterlife Both the Benches of Hope and Happy to Chat benches are a great addition to the city's parks and allow people to sit and reflect, and to meet and talk to others, thereby helping to combat isolation and loneliness.

Parks Playgrounds and Infrastructure

I'm delighted with the progress that we have made this year with our investment in play facilities and infrastructure in parks across the city. With a strong emphasis on our efforts to become a Child Friendly City, we will have invested an estimated £3 million of Capital and Section 106 funding in 2021/22 to refurbish and renew children's play areas and essential infrastructure schemes. The following projects have either been completed or are scheduled for completion by the end of March 2022:

- Maindy Park (Gelligaer Street)
- Llandaff Fields Play Area (Phase A)
- Parc Caedelyn Play Area
- Grange Gardens Play Area
- Adamscroft Play Area
- Glenmount Way
- Lascelles Drive Play Area
- Peppermint Drive Play Area
- Adamstown Square
- Anderson Fields
- Howard Gardens
- Pontcanna Riding School
- Parc Treddelerch
- Garth Newydd
- Creigiau Play Area
- Mill Road
- Anti-Motorcycle Fencing (Splott and Trelai Park)
- Allotment Fencing (Ely Farm and Pontcanna)
- Roath Park Log Wall
- Tharsis Close
- Fairwater Steps

The design of play schemes has resulted in the introduction of modern equipment, areas to develop creativity, recycled materials, natural play features and equipment designed for inclusivity for children with disabilities. Plans are now being developed for 2022/23 to make further investment and build upon the positive work undertaken to date.

Physical Activity and Sport Strategy

Through collaboration with Public Health and our Joint Venture Partner, Cardiff Met Sport, a Physical Activity and Sport Strategy for Cardiff has been developed, which has been ratified by the Cardiff Public Services Board and endorsed by the Cabinet this month. The strategy will be launched in Spring 2022 and focuses on improving levels of participation for our citizens, supporting communities where participation is low, and addressing the current health inequalities that exist in our city. I am delighted that this agenda is being driven by both the city's Sport and Health sectors, and there is already evidence of strong engagement with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders.

Llanrumney Sports Hub

I'm pleased to report that planning permission has been granted for the development of a new Football and Rugby Campus, in partnership with Cardiff University and Cardiff City Football Club (CCFC), at Llanrumney. The scheme will provide 4 x 3G pitches, a modern clubhouse, and changing and catering facilities. The development will see a return to Cardiff of the CCFC Academy from Treforest, as well as access to the facilities for local community clubs. The new facilities will serve as a centralised venue for Mini Football and Mini Rugby in the east of the city and have great potential to make a positive impact on the area and raise the aspirations of young people participating in sport.

Councillor Peter Bradbury
Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure
20 January 2022