

COUNCIL: 17 MARCH 2022

FINANCE, MODERNISATION & PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

Real Living Wage

I am very proud of the significant progress that we have made in growing the real Living Wage movement in Cardiff over the course of the current Administration. The number of people earning below the real Living Wage in Cardiff has fallen from 42,000 in 2017 to 24,000 in 2021, and we are eager to build on the success of recent years.

After comfortably exceeding our city-wide targets for April 2022, the Living Wage City Steering Group met on 7 March 2022 to agree a new Action Plan and three ambitious new targets. By April 2024, we aim to have 260 accredited real Living Wage employers in Cardiff, 85,000 employees working for real Living Wage employers and 10,500 workers receiving a pay rise to at least the real Living Wage. I am pleased to announce that South Wales Police has recently received accreditation, and work to secure South Wales Fire & Rescue Service's accreditation is progressing, which means that 7 of the 8 organisations that are members of the Cardiff PSB will soon be accredited as real Living Wage employers.

Into Work Advice Service

The remodelled Into Work Advice Service was launched on 1 April 2018, combining income from different funding streams, including the Welsh Government, European Social Fund and the Council's own resources. The service has created a universal offer to those seeking employment help and upskilling within Cardiff. Since April 2018, the service has supported over 194,767 people with employment help and assisted 3,637 people to secure employment, 850 businesses with recruitment and over 11,500 people with Universal Credit claims, helping some of the most vulnerable in the city.

The service can support all jobseekers within Cardiff, regardless of circumstance, whether they are in or out of work, require light touch help or more intensive mentoring. The all-inclusive, one front door approach to employability provision is unique to the Into Work Advice Service and, due to its success, neighbouring local authorities are now modelling their own employability provision on this approach.

Recent additions to the Into Work Advice Service include a number of new projects such as the Onsite Construction Academy and Cardiff Cares Academy. Cardiff Works and Adult Learning have also recently moved under the Into Work Advice Service umbrella, which has increased the provision offered to jobseekers, by offering a complete pathway into employment.

The service has been able to offer a dedicated resource for the most vulnerable young people in the city, who are care experienced or are at risk of homelessness through the Bright Futures, Bright Start and MILES projects. As Corporate Parents to these young people, the Council's team provides one-to-one support, through well-being and confidence building activities, preparing them to go into employment, education or training, and helping them to move towards independent living. Since the launch of these projects, the team has helped over 300 young people, supporting 97 into employment, 54 in education and 88 into training, further highlighting the success and hard work of the Into Work Advice Service over the past four years.

HGV Training Scheme

The new HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) training scheme, which helps people to start or re-enter the HGV driver workforce was launched at the end of February 2022 by the Into Work Advice Service. The scheme has been developed by the service to provide learners with the skills and knowledge they need to become a qualified HGV driver. The course includes driver training, practical and theory test, medical and more, as well as the ongoing support of an Into Work mentor throughout the process. The scheme was developed in response to the recent shortage of HGV drivers over recent months, which added to the usual winter pressures on service delivery. It will not only help the sector and people in Cardiff by providing the training and support that they need to become a qualified HGV driver, but will also support council service delivery. The team is working closely with other services across the Council that have HGV roles within their services, such as our waste and recycling teams, to support their recruitment of skilled drivers. Funding has also been secured through the UK Government's Community Renewal Fund to support reskilling in priority sectors.

National Careers Week

The Into Work Advice Service has supported this year's National Careers Week (7-12 March 2022) through a packed series of information events and training sessions spread across the city's Hubs. Into Work Mentors and Adult Learning Trainers have hosted HGV Driver Information Sessions, Employability Support, Digital Skills Training, Get Into Construction, Hospitality Training, Cardiff Cares Academy Sessions, and Cardiff Works Job stands.

NHS Recruitment Support

Following on from the successful partnership working with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to support refugee doctors into clinical shadowing placements, the Into Work Advice Service will be supporting the NHS with a series of recruitment support events across the city. Staff will be on hand to support customers to apply for current NHS vacancies, with the opportunity to speak directly with recruiting NHS managers.

Website

www.cardiff.gov.uk had 204,000 visitors last month who viewed 687,000 pages of information. There was a spike in visitors to the homepage on 17 February 2022 with residents seeking information on recycling & waste collections and the impact of Storm Eunice. Last month, 68% of website visitors used a mobile device and 15,800 online payments were made via the website totalling £2million. In addition, over 250 pdf files were removed from the website and replaced with accessible content. The website is now achieving an accessibility score of 93, which places it joint third in Wales.

CardiffGov Mobile App

Total downloads for the CardiffGov mobile app at the end of February 2022 totalled 55,881 and the app continues to receive positive feedback from users. Forthcoming updates to the app will allow residents to make reports of graffiti around the city by providing the location and uploading a photograph, as well as improving accessibility for all users. The team is currently reviewing the functionality of push notifications and last minute calendar changes, which were required due to Storm Eunice, as part of future improvements. The team has also been working closely with the UK Government's Central Digital and Data Office to develop improvements following their assessment, which was received in December 2021. The CardiffGov app is the first local authority mobile app to be assessed in line with accessibility standards that came into force in June 2021.

BOBi Chatbot

The total number of chats handled by the BOBi chatbot since it was launched is now over 105,000, with 4,966 conversations taking place in February 2022. BOBi has been expanded to support residents with enquiries in relation to Council Tax, Fines and Elections. There has also been increased use of the chatbot at weekends, particularly on the weekend of 19-20 February 2022 following Storm Eunice. To help direct customers to the relevant information on Storm Eunice, the team added a temporary banner to the chat function to both highlight further content, but also to ensure that the customer experience of using the chatbot wasn't interrupted. Feedback scores following use of the chatbot remain high, with 89% of customers marking their experience as Very Good, Good or OK last month. The team is working on improving the feedback mechanism to request more information from customers to help identify further improvements or services that they wish to see.

Scrutiny Task & Finish Inquiry Report on Home & Agile Working

The final draft report of the Task & Finish Inquiry into Home & Agile Working was considered by the Policy Review and Performance (PRAP) Scrutiny Committee on 8 March 2022. Whilst this report was not able to be received by the Cabinet at its meeting on 10 March 2022, I want to assure the Chair and members of the PRAP Scrutiny Committee that a shift to hybrid working is a key priority for the Council as part of our recovery and renewal programme, and the Committee's findings and recommendations are not only welcomed, but will also help to inform how our hybrid working model is developed and implemented by the Council in 2022/23. I'd like to also thank the Chair and members of PRAP Scrutiny Committee, both for this Task & Finish report and for all their work and service to the Council over the last five years.

Councillor Chris Weaver
Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance
11 March 2022