



Date: 01 March 2023

Councillor Weaver  
Cabinet Member, Finance, Modernisation and Performance  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Public Letter

Dear Councillor Weaver,

**Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee: 28 February 2023**

On behalf of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee, please accept Members' thanks for attending, along with Cabinet colleagues and officers, for our scrutiny of the draft Corporate Plan 2023-2026 and Budgetary Proposals. Members have asked that I pass on the following comments and observations, which are set out to mirror the structure of the meeting.

**Corporate Plan 2023 – 2026**

Members looked at the proposed steps, measures, and targets in the areas of the Corporate Plan relevant to our terms of reference. Members highlighted that the only section of the Corporate Plan that seems to reference Arts and Culture is Well Being Objective 5. Members believe Arts and Culture can also play a key role in addressing other areas, such as Well Being Objective 4 – Safe, Confident and Empowered Communities. Members note a new Culture Strategy is being prepared to align with Welsh Government's new Culture Strategy.

Therefore, **Members request** that the next Corporate Plan considers how arts and culture can help and be used across the city to achieve a Stronger, Fairer and Greener Cardiff and meet our Future Generations ambition, and that this is reflected in wider incorporation of arts and culture across the Well Being Objectives.

## **Overall Budget**

Members note the following points in particular:

- The level of FTE posts being lost is approximately the same as 6/7 years ago
- Approximately a third of FTE posts being lost are already vacant
- Some of the FTE posts shown as being potentially transferred relate to St David's Hall, with a decision on this yet to be taken
- The £10million Covid-19 budget is being released and used towards realignments
- The Economic Development Directorate base budget has been realigned to address pressures.

## **Cllr Merry's Portfolio**

Thank you for covering this portfolio following apologies from Cllr Merry and Suzanne Scarlett who were unable to attend this meeting due to a prior commitment. Members are pleased to note that Cardiff Commitment is to receive an increase in funding, via £400,000 increased income from external grant funding.

## **Councillor Bradbury's portfolio**

Members are pleased to note the Into Work service area has received an overall increase in funding via creative use of grants, including via the Shared Prosperity Fund where funding is guaranteed until 2025.

Members are pleased to note that the recommendations made following the Scrutiny Chairs Performance Panel – to add a step regarding in-work support and to add a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) regarding Into Work clients who identify as being from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background – have been accepted and included in the draft Corporate Plan. However, Members would like there to be a target set against the new KPI and I **wish to accept** Cllr Bradbury's offer to work with me to ensure the spirit and letter of the Scrutiny Chairs recommendation is addressed in full.

Regarding HACE3, Members note the Achievability and Residual RAG ratings should be showing as Green now, as both posts are now vacant.

### **Cllr Thorne's portfolio**

Members highlighted the wording used in the Finance section of the cover report, at point 25b, which state *'In respect of Hubs and Libraries, proposals to reduce opening hours and / or close on weekends have not been taken forward and any changes are being limited to removing a small number of long-term vacant posts in the service'*. Members queried why vacant posts were identified as 'long-term' in this statement but not in the relevant budget lines and HACE4, which also includes 1 voluntary redundancy, and HACSC1, which states posts will be deleted as they are vacated. Members note Cllr Thorne's response that the wording of 25b should be amended.

Members note the officer's response that the vacant posts referred to in HACE4 had been vacant for circa 6 months and that, in relation to HACSC1, the intention is to have a gradual move to volunteers to ensure there are sufficient resources in hubs.

Members queried how staff are to be re-allocated following the deletion of posts and are pleased to note the officer's assurances that staff will be moved across the service to ensure each library and hub has adequate resources in place, and that other teams such as Into Work staff can open/ close buildings to ensure opening hours remain.

### **Councillor Thomas's portfolio**

Members note that the location of trees in Central Square is led by expert guidance on crowd management and crowd control, required to deal with the high footfall experienced on event days, such as the recent Six Nations matches hosted in Cardiff.

With regard to work to develop south of Central Station, Members note this project is led by Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment, that the intention is for this site to host National Express, and that recently confirmed Levelling Up funding for the Metro across Callaghan Square will assist the work south of Central Station.

## **Councillor Goodway's portfolio**

Members wish to pass on their thanks to Cllr Thomas for remaining to answer questions on this portfolio, in the absence of Cllr Goodway who had prior commitments preventing his attendance at the meeting.

Regarding ECDE18, Members note that, as the four posts proposed for deletion are vacant, there will not be a reduction in existing capacity. Members also note officers are seeking external funding to complement existing resources and increase service delivery.

Members note that ECDE14 relates to officers seeking to claim for the administrative work undertaken in regard to applying for and administering grants, resulting in more income from grants, as well as utilising grants more, such as Transforming Towns grants.

Members highlighted that consultation responses and feedback received from their constituents often question why the Council is prioritising major projects such as the Indoor Arena and Canal Quarter at a time when resources are stretched. Members therefore sought an explanation to allay these concerns. Members note Cllr Thomas's response that major projects provide employment, training and business during construction, result in a more attractive public realm, and ultimately will lead to more visitors, higher footfall and dwell-time, which in turn supports existing businesses, as well as other benefits, such as the SUDs scheme at the Canal Quarter. Members also note that, in respect of the Indoor Arena, the development partner will repay costs to the Council and will meet inflationary pressures, and the Indoor Arena will be owned by the Council at the end of the contract. Finally, Members note that significant parts of the Canal Quarter scheme are grant-funded and so do not impact on monies available for council service delivery.

Members sought the rationale for not increasing filming charges in the city given that this could raise revenue, given the likely increase in filming in Cardiff. Members note the explanation that these fees and charges relate to the film office and that, as appropriate, other fees and charges would be levied, for example for road closures and venue hire.

Members asked how the need for post pandemic city centre recovery is addressed by the Corporate Plan and note the response that Step 5.04 deals with this, alongside the Council's previously published Recovery Strategy and City Centre Recovery Action Plan. Members noted the Council holds regular meetings with the City Centre Business Improvement District, For Cardiff, as well as landowners and that footfall numbers are healthier in Cardiff than elsewhere.

Members are pleased to hear Cllr Thomas emphasising that the 15-minute toolkit is as much an Economic tool as an Environmental tool, hence its inclusion in WBO5, and note that this approach is being embedded in Neighbourhood Regeneration and Shared Prosperity Fund projects.

Regarding the Indoor Arena, Members note it will have a 15,000 capacity, a Multi-Storey Car Park with slightly fewer spaces than currently provided by existing surface car parks at County Hall and the Red Dragon Centre, will generate footfall to support public transport, with Levelling Up funding to be used to assist in planned work to extend the Metro, provide a tram link from Cardiff Central as well as to improve walk and cycle routes via Lloyd George Avenue.

### **Councillor Burke's portfolio**

Members received a petition from Jane Henderson, lead petitioner for Cardiff Civic Society, and note her thanks to Cabinet for listening and not taking forward the proposal regarding the Museum of Cardiff. Members were interested to hear the points made by Jane and were pleased to hear Cllr Burke emphasise her intention to work with trustees and other stakeholders to develop proposals for a sustainable future for the museum. During our way forward discussions, Members decided to add the Museum of Cardiff to our work programme, and we will be in touch with officers and stakeholders to scope a constructive scrutiny in future months.

Members sought confirmation that the Cabinet is progressing plans regarding St David's Hall, as outlined to our committee in December 2022, and note that work is ongoing to go through the VEAT process, with a report on this coming back to scrutiny prior to the Cabinet making a decision. Members note this work is driven by the need to address the condition of St David's Hall. During our scrutiny in December 2022, Members requested that budget consultation materials were placed in St David's Hall and this request was accepted; however, Members can see no

reference to this in the Consultation Report. Therefore, **Members request** clarification on whether or not budget consultation materials were placed in St David's Hall and that the answer on this be included in your response to this letter.

Members note the officer's assurance that there is no linkage between the Indoor Arena and St David's Hall projects.

Regarding Pentwyn Leisure Centre, Members note the advice from officers that they are still working to a £5M budget, as previously advised. In your response to this letter, **Members request** clarification on where this is reflected in the capital programme. Also, **Members request** clarification on whether the proposed way forward will include a pool and café, as previously discussed.

Regarding the filming charges for Cardiff Castle hire, Members note there is a range of charges depending on whether hire is for the whole of the Castle, specific rooms, or more general usage. Members also note the level of charge reflects advice received from the Council's film unit on how to raise revenue and stay competitive.

Thank you once again for your attendance at Committee. I would be grateful if you would consider the above and work with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holders to provide a response to this letter.

Finally, Members would like to pass on their sincere thanks to all officers for their work in developing the Corporate Plan and Budgetary Proposals and for ensuring these arrived in time for publication of this committee's papers.

This letter requires a response please, to the following requests:

### **Request**

1. **Members request** that the next Corporate Plan considers how arts and culture can help and be used across the city to achieve a Stronger, Fairer and Greener Cardiff and meet our Future Generations ambition, and that this is reflected in wider incorporation of arts and culture across the Well Being Objectives
2. **Members request** clarification on whether or not budget consultation materials were placed in St David's Hall and that the answer on this be included in your response to this letter.

3. **Members request** clarification on where the £5M budget for Pentwyn Leisure Centre, where this is reflected in the capital programme.
4. **Members request** clarification on whether the proposed way forward for Pentwyn Leisure Centre will include a pool and café, as previously discussed.

Yours sincerely,

*P Wong*

**COUNCILLOR PETER WONG  
CHAIR, ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee  
Zack Hellard – Youth Council representative  
Group Leaders - Cllr Robson, Cllr Berman  
David Hugh Thomas – Chair, Governance & Audit Committee  
Cllr Merry Cllr Thorne Cllr Thomas Cllr Bradbury Cllr Goodway Cllr Burke  
Chris Lee Ian Allwood Gill Brown  
Neil Hanratty Donna Jones Jon Day Jon Maidment  
Helen Evans Rebecca Hooper  
Rita Rohman Christine Brain Clair James  
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Chris Pyke Tim Gordon Jeremy Rhys