

ECONOMY & CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Councillor Wong(Chairperson)
Councillors Berman, Brown-Reckless, Cunnah, Henshaw,
Jenkins, Lloyd Jones, Naughton and Thomson

60 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Zack Hellard, Youth Council Representative.

61 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

62 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 12.12.22 were agreed as a correct record subject to a minor amendment on attendance list. The minutes of the meeting held on 18.01.23 were agreed as a correct record.

63 : DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2026 AND BUDGETARY PROPOSALS 2023-2024

The Chair advised Committee that this item provided Members with an opportunity to consider those items in the draft Corporate Plan and draft Budgetary Proposals that fall within the remit of this Committee, with Cabinet considering these on Thursday 2 March, prior to Council on 9 March 2023.

The Chair explained that Members had the scrutiny cover report as part of their pack of papers for this meeting, with the cover report structured by Cabinet Member portfolio.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member – Finance, Modernisation & Performance), Chris Lee - Corporate Director Resources and Ian Allwood – Head of Finance for this item. Councillor Weaver was invited to make a statement, after which Officers provided a presentation.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Corporate Plan 2023 – 2026

Members highlighted that the only section of the Corporate Plan that seems to reference Arts and Culture is Well Being Objective 5. Members believed 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 noted a new Culture Strategy is being prepared to align with Welsh Government's new Culture Strategy.

Overall Budget

During their discussions, Members noted 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

Members were 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

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed Cllr Bradbury – Cabinet Member, Tackling Poverty & Supporting Young People and Helen Evans - Assistant Director – Housing and Communities

Members were reminded that the areas of Cllr Bradbury's portfolio that come under this committee are Into Work services and Adult Community Learning.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members were 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 were 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 wished to accept Cllr Bradbury's offer to work with the Chairperson to ensure the spirit and letter of the Scrutiny Chairs recommendation is addressed in full.

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

Cllr Thorne's portfolio

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne, Rebecca Hooper – Operational Manager, Neighbourhood Regeneration and Helen Evans (Assistant Director- Housing & Communities)

Members were reminded that the areas of Cllr Thorne's portfolio that come under this committee are Libraries & Hubs and Local Regeneration.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members highlighted the wording used in the Finance section of the cover report, at point 25b, which stated '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 noted Cllr Thorne's response that the wording of 25b should be amended. Members noted 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 were 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

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed the Leader, Councillor Huw Thomas and Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development)

Members were reminded that the sections that fall within Committee's portfolio are City Deal and regional partnerships.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members noted 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 noted 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

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed the Leader, Councillor Huw Thomas, Neil Hanratty (Director of Economic Development), Donna Jones - Assistant Director, County Estates and Jon Day – Operational Manager, Investment & Tourism

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

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

Members noted 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 noted 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 noted 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.

Members noted 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 noted 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 noted 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 were 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 noted that this approach is being embedded in Neighbourhood Regeneration and Shared Prosperity Fund projects.

Regarding the Indoor Arena, Members noted 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

For this section, the Chairperson welcomed Cllr Burke, Cabinet Member – Culture, Parks, Events and Venues, Jon Maidment, Head of Parks & Cardiff Harbour Authority, Donna Jones - Assistant Director, County Estates and Neil Hanratty.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members received a petition from Jane Henderson, lead petitioner for Cardiff Civic Society, and noted 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 Henderson 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.

Members sought confirmation that the Cabinet is progressing plans regarding St David's Hall, as outlined to committee in December 2022, and noted 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 noted this work is driven by the need to address the condition of St David's Hall.

During Committee's scrutiny in December 2022, Members requested that budget consultation materials were placed in St David's Hall and this request was accepted; however, Members could see no reference to this in the Consultation Report.

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

Regarding Pentwyn Leisure Centre, Members noted the advice from officers that they are still working to a £5M budget, as previously advised. Members requested clarification on where this is reflected in the capital programme. Also, Members requested 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 noted 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 noted the level of charge reflects advice received from the Council's film unit on how to raise revenue and stay competitive.

Some Members wished to place their concerns on record that they felt their questioning had been curtailed during the meeting by the number of questions being restricted.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

64 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

65 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 21 March 2023

The meeting terminated at 3.55 pm