

COUNCIL: 26 OCTOBER 2023

LEADER STATEMENT

40th Anniversary of Cardiff-Xiamen Twinning Partnership

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the twinning partnership between Cardiff and Xiamen in China. The Council received an invitation to attend a ceremony in Xiamen, which was hosted by the Vice Mayor of Xiamen to mark the occasion. I was pleased to provide a message of congratulations for the event, which was attended by council officers and representatives from both Cardiff and Vale College and Cardiff University. The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama also participated in the form of recorded musical performances and a pre-recorded speech by the College's Principal. The anniversary event included meetings with the Vice Mayor of Xiamen, the British Consul General Guangzhou, British Embassy Beijing diplomatic staff and the Welsh Government's Chief Representative from Shanghai. Invited guests included British companies in Xiamen and alumni from Cardiff University, along with senior representation from Xiamen Government Departments and Universities.

Visit to Nantes

As part of the Cardiff Music City work, the Council recently co-supported a showcase of Cardiff and Wales based acts at Stereolux venue on Île de Nantes in our twin city of Nantes in France to celebrate Welsh and French music. The programme was delivered by Cardiff grassroots music venue, Clwb Ifor Bach, as part of the Welsh Government's Wales in France programme and coincided with the Wales v Georgia match on 7 October 2023, which was held in Nantes as part of the Rugby World Cup 2023 group stages.

Over 800 people attended the concert and it was great to see Welsh talent being warmly received and broadcast live on French television. The concert was also recorded for S4C. Acts included Wales-based Luke RV, Sage Todz, Local and Adwaith and also France-based electronic acts Ebel Elektrik, Lle De Garde and Mnnqns who are a French band that was actually formed in Cardiff University. Representatives in attendance included partners from Wales Arts International, Arts Council of Wales, British Council and Nantes Metropole. The broadcast of the event was also supported by Cardiff-based Orchard Media. We aim to build on this Team Wales/France collaboration as part of our continued music development work in Cardiff.

During the visit to Nantes, I was pleased to meet with the Mayor of Nantes ahead of the 60th anniversary of the twinning partnership between Cardiff and Nantes in 2024. I also visited the new urban 'agro-district' of Doulon-Gohards to see how the development of 3,000 new housing units is being combined with urban farming, environmental improvements and other new community facilities, including a new school. Cardiff Council representatives discussed a range of issues with colleagues from Nantes, including our annual programme of planting over 30,000 trees in the city as part of the Coed Caerdydd initiative, as well as emerging proposals for a grant-funded partnership project between our two council's Parks Services in relation to work experience exchanges for apprenticeships & trainees and sustainable management practices.

Cardiff Public Services Board

The Cardiff Public Services Board met on 4 October 2023 at the Oasis Centre in Splott, which celebrated its 15th birthday on 29 September 2023. It was therefore fitting that the PSB discussed issues relating to the current provision of support for refugees and asylum seekers in Cardiff and the response by public service partners. The PSB also received an update on the joint 'Amplifying Prevention' work that the Council is undertaking in partnership with the Cardiff & Vale Local Public Health Team to tackle health inequalities, specifically in relation to the uptake of childhood vaccinations in the city and, in particular, within minority ethnic communities.

Ministerial Visit to Former Gasworks Site

On 21 September 2023, I was pleased to join my colleagues, the Cabinet Members for Housing & Communities and Finance, Modernisation & Performance, to welcome the Welsh Government Minister for Finance and Local Government and her officials to the Yr Hafan site on the former Gasworks site at Ferry Road in Grangetown. The Minister was able to see one of the new modular home units being installed on the site and was briefed on the current development by project leads. The Minister also visited Yr Hafan Community Centre where she met with residents and frontline staff, as well as specialist housing officers who provided an overview of the project and made clear the current pressures on Homeless and Accommodation Services in Cardiff.

Arup Events

I joined the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and council officers in attending an informal roundtable event on 27 September 2023, which was organised by Arup and discussed a collaborative approach to delivering a Greener Cardiff. I was also pleased to participate subsequently in a panel discussion at the Arup Autumn Lunch event on 20 October 2023, alongside one of the Commissioners from the National Infrastructure Commission for Wales and representatives from Arup, which focused on the topic of 'unlocking the value of nature'. The debate provided a further opportunity for me to set out the Council's plans for responding to the Climate and Nature Emergencies by delivering our Greener Cardiff commitments, including implementation of our One Planet Cardiff strategy and the development of a new Nature Recovery Action Plan for Cardiff.

UNISON Cymru Wales Seminar – A National Care Service for Wales

In November 2022, UNISON Cymru Wales published a report on 'A National Care Service for Wales', which had been commissioned from the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE), and I spoke at an event where this report was launched last year. A follow-up seminar event was held earlier this month on 3 October 2023, which considered a report by the Centre for International Corporate Tax Accountability and Research (CICTAR) about profit making in the care sector and rising costs as the result of finance being raised through property investment. The CICTAR report revealed that an estimated £1.3bn per year (£24.8m a week or £8,000 per bed per year) of rent is being paid to private care home landlords across the UK, with profit margins as high as 80%. I was pleased to attend and speak at the event alongside the Leader of Swansea Council.

Cardiff Business Roadshow

I was pleased to speak earlier this month at a Cardiff Business Roadshow event organised by the Council for City Centre businesses. 85 businesses registered for the event, as well as a number of business representative groups. The event provided an opportunity for Cardiff Council representatives, alongside those from the Development Bank for Wales, Business Wales, Transport for Wales and Cardiff and Vale College, outline what support was available for business, as well as giving a platform for businesses to raise issues with public sector partners. Businesses were also provided with briefings on the city's Business Improvement District, loans and financial support, Shared Prosperity Fund grants, transport infrastructure, business training and support and business rates. A similar event is being planned to take place in the east of the city later this year and further details on the event will be communicated in advance to key partners and stakeholders.

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader of the Council
20 October 2023