

**COUNCIL: 30 NOVEMBER 2023**

---

## **LEADER STATEMENT**

---

### **Official Opening of New Fitzalan High School Building**

I was pleased to attend and speak at the official opening of the new Fitzalan High School building on 16 November 2023, alongside Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, the First Minister of Wales and Member of the Senedd for Cardiff West. The new school building was also visited last month by Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales. The new £64m school was jointly funded by the Council and Welsh Government, through the city's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme. The school staff, pupils and governors welcomed guests to the school including local politicians and representatives from Kier who played a key part in the school's construction.

### **School of Sanctuary Award**

Ysgol Y Berllan Deg in Llanedeyrn has become the first Welsh medium primary school in Cardiff to be recognised as a School of Sanctuary or Ysgol Noddfa. The award recognises the creation of a welcoming environment where pupils, staff and their wider communities understand what it means to be seeking sanctuary. I was pleased to visit the school on 24 October 2023 and present the school with its award during a special event that was attended by pupils. Twenty Cardiff schools are now recognised as Schools of Sanctuary and, with the support of the Council's Ethnic Minority Travellers Achievement Service (EMTAS), many more are working towards recognition.

### **Living Wage Week 2023**

As part of this year's Living Wage Week, Cardiff Business School hosted a Breakfast Briefing event on 10 November where I spoke alongside Cardiff University's new Vice Chancellor, Professor Wendy Lerner. The event provided an opportunity for me to speak about how the Council has led the drive and partnership work to make Cardiff a Living Wage City. Both Cardiff Business School and Cardiff University have also played important roles as part of the work undertaken in the city to date.

As part of the Breakfast Briefing event, academics from Cardiff Business School (Dr Deborah Hann, Professor Edmund Heery and Dr David Nash) shared the key findings from their report, entitled '*Twenty Years of the Living Wage: The Employer Experience*', which was based on a survey conducted in 2021 of all accredited Living Wage employers to examine the impact of the Living Wage on their organisations.

The research found that 85% of employers said that accreditation had enhanced their organisation's reputation, with 67% saying it had provided a competitive advantage. Around 60% said it had helped with recruitment and retention, with a similar number saying that accreditation had improved staff commitment and motivation.

Since its launch twenty years ago, more than 16,000 employers have signed up to pay the Real Living Wage, generating a pay increase for more than 350,000 employees and a total wage transfer of about £3bn.

### **Cardiff Business Awards 2023**

I was pleased to welcome guests to this year's Cardiff Business Awards on 17 November 2023, which was the ninth edition of the awards event to have been held in the city. The annual awards were, once again, supported by the Council and this year's awards attracted applications from some of the leading sectors in the city, including strong representation from the creative and digital industries and from SMEs across a wide range of business sectors. The Cardiff Business Awards enjoyed another successful year, with 77 companies being shortlisted for this year's awards and a total of 20 awards being handed out on the night across a wide range of industry categories.

### **Transport for Wales Metro Depot**

I was pleased to visit the impressive new Transport for Wales Metro Depot and Integrated Control Centre at Taffs Well on 17 November 2023 to see the progress that is being made in the construction of the £100 million facility. Whilst it is located just outside of Cardiff's boundaries, the new Metro Depot will be home to 36 Citylink Class 398 tram-trains and over 400 employees, and it was great to see the new tram-trains that will come into service next year on the Rhondda, Cynon and Merthyr Tydfil railway lines.

### **Gŵyl Cerdd Dant 2023**

Gŵyl Cerdd Dant is an annual music festival that has been held at different locations across Wales since 1934. Earlier this month on 11 November 2023, the music festival returned to Cardiff for the first time in over 40 years and was held at Cardiff and Vale College. The Council was proud to be the event's main sponsor and was pleased to welcome people to Cardiff from all over Wales for this prestigious event in the Welsh cultural calendar. As the capital city of Wales, Cardiff continues to play a key role to play in supporting and promoting Welsh music and culture and the festival provided a great opportunity for people to experience our nation's rich heritage first-hand.

**Councillor Huw Thomas**  
**Leader of the Council**  
**24 November 2023**