

**COUNCIL: 26 NOVEMBER 2020**

---

**FINANCE, MODERNISATION & PERFORMANCE STATEMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM:**

---

**Living Wage Week 2020**

Living Wage Week took place between 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020, and included the announcement of the new real Living Wage rate of £9.50 per hour, which is an uplift from last year's rate of £9.30 per hour.

Since October 2020, another four organisations in the city have also become accredited as Living Wage employers, including the Welsh Local Government Association, taking the total number to 121. Among the Core Cities, Cardiff has the second-highest number of Living Wage employers behind only Glasgow.

The Council's Commissioning & Procurement team actively participated at events held throughout the week, and I attended the virtual Living Wage Week launch where the Leader spoke about Cardiff's experience as a Living Wage City and how this has impacted the foundational economy in the region. The Council promoted Living Wage Week through social media channels, a press release and Living Wage flags were flown at Cardiff Castle. The Council also supported Cynnal Cymru to develop a Living Wage video, which shows the Leader, local businesses and employees promoting the real Living Wage.

**Provisional Financial Settlement for 2021/22**

In September Council approved the Budget Strategy Report 2021/22 which indicated that we expected to receive the Provisional Local Government Settlement in "early December", following which there would be public consultation on budget proposals. Members may be aware that Welsh Government have now confirmed the date of the draft budget will be 21<sup>st</sup> December, with the provisional settlement published on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, the timing of which will mean that cabinet proposals for consultation will be brought in early January. The Welsh Government have had to move their draft budget and Provisional Financial Settlement to later in December due to the UK Government decision to hold the Spending Review on 25<sup>th</sup> November. The UK Government's November Spending Review will be for one year only.

**Business Support Grants**

The Council's Finance team has worked closely with the Economic Development team have administered over 7,500 business grants to support businesses during the Covid-

19 pandemic. The total of these grants is over £70m. Over 3,000 applications have been received to date for firebreak-related grants and this number is continuing to rise.

The Lockdown Business Fund was set up to support businesses with cash flow support to help them survive the economic consequences of the firebreak restrictions put in place. Eligible businesses include those businesses in receipt of small business rates relief; retail, leisure and hospitality businesses with a rateable value of between £12,001 and £51,000; alongside charities and registered community amateur sports clubs operating in the same sectors. Discretionary grants are also available.

Full details of the Lockdown Business Fund and other schemes to support businesses are available on the Council's website.

### **Website**

In October 2020, the Council's website saw 196,000 visitors with over 700,000 page views. During this period, the "Support for Business" page was in the top 10 most viewed pages for the whole site with 16,403 views. There were also over 19,000 page views of information on the local lockdown and boundary map for Cardiff. In addition, two additional websites have been launched recently – one showcasing online hub and library events at: [www.cardiffhubs.co.uk](http://www.cardiffhubs.co.uk) and the other for the One Planet Cardiff consultation at: [www.oneplanetcardiff.co.uk](http://www.oneplanetcardiff.co.uk)

### **Mobile App/Digital Service Developments**

The Cardiff Gov app has now been downloaded over 35,000 times, with residents continuing to take up the services as they are released. The bulky waste collections service, which went live in September 2020, saw 68% of all bookings being made via the web or app in its first full month of running in October 2020. Further services are being developed with bookings for recycling centres due to be available on the Cardiff Gov app at the end of November 2020.

### **BOBi (ChatBot)**

The recent national 'firebreak' lockdown appears to have had an impact on the number of chats handled by BOBi, with a slightly lower than average number of conversations taking place. The majority of customers continue to have a positive experience in their interactions, with 88.37% of feedback scores recorded as 'Very Good', 'Good' or 'OK'. All feedback scores and comments are analysed by the Digital Delivery team in order to identify opportunities for improvement.

A new conversational service for ordering free waste bags and checking local stockists has gone live and is proving popular with customers. Statistical and anecdotal evidence points to the service being very easy and convenient to use. The development team continues to work on broadening BOBi's skill set, including an interactive process for reporting missed waste collections, and a revised service for displaying recycling information. Beta testing of the Amazon Alexa skill is underway with a focus on user experience, tone and content.

### **Connect to Cardiff (C2C)**

C2C has remained busy throughout October 2020, with 40,430 calls and 4,091 emails. This is against a backdrop of a proportion of call centre staff continuing to work from home where possible. The team within the contact centre has handled 11,330 social media messages and 1,527 webchats, with the most popular subjects for posts being Coronavirus (1206); Cycling (946); City Centre (770); Parks (760) and Garden Waste (554). Both Facebook and Twitter saw an increase in followers during this period.

### **Volunteer Befriending Support with the Into Work Volunteering Team**

Working with Age Cymru, a new befriending service is being set up by the Into Work team to help the over 50s. This project will use volunteers to chat to those who want to have a conversation with someone. Volunteers will also signpost clients to other assistance in the city such as help with food delivery, medication and even referring to Independent Living Services if required. The team will promote this volunteering opportunity online. This will not only help those who access the support, but also volunteers looking for vital work experience opportunities which have become reduced over the Covid-19 pandemic. This service will be promoted through sheltered housing, internal partners, external stakeholders, as well as working with the Council's communications team.

**Councillor Chris Weaver**

**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance**

**19 November 2020**