

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and
Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

Please ask for: Cllr Robert Francis-Davies
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Our Ref: RFD/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 12 November 2019

BY EMAIL

Dear Councillor Holley

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel, regarding our meeting to hear about the work of West Glamorgan Archive Service, on 16th September. I apologise for the delay in responding, largely caused by the priority of budget setting and establishing our forthcoming Medium Term financial Plan, I do hope you understand.

In the first instance, may I take the opportunity to correct one of your observations, which is detailed on page 2, in that the Archive Service is the 15th busiest in the UK, not Wales. A positive correction amongst your many positive comments, thank you. Secondly, I note your concern about the pace of establishing a future base for the Archive Service. I am grateful for the interest of the Panel in its future and welcome any volunteers to assist in signposting and advocating for its future, but am not able to accept your recommendation to establish a dedicated working group to look at the relocation needs of one service, in isolation of the wider agenda.

As you are aware, decanting the Civic Centre involves the relocation of a number of services, hubs, partnerships and public resources, and I am assured that the needs of the Archive Service is being considered in a timely way, as part of an integrated and managed programme. I am concerned that a group focusing on just one aspect could unwittingly create a disjointed response and risk an optimum outcome.

I appreciate this may be disappointing, but it is perhaps worth remembering that there is already a governance structure in place to safeguard the future provision of the Service – which is a joint service with Neath Port Talbot, in the form of an independent committee, overseen by Welsh Govt. This committee sits alongside our own internal checks and balances and reporting systems for the service, as well as a structure for overseeing the various projects and regeneration schemes in the City Centre, including the Civic Centre relocation.

In this respect, whilst I also welcome the interest in fundraising for a new facility, the above structures also including coordinating a pipeline of funding applications, which mean we avoid duplication and risk of rejection on the basis of perceived clash and lack of matched resources. The Archives are very much part of this consideration and stand

a much stronger chance of an exciting and enterprising future, with sustainable revenue costs fully considered, as a result.

Please do be assured of my gratitude and appreciation of your concerns and interest but reciprocally, I hope you can appreciate that whilst in many circumstances a dedicated working group can be a solution to solve challenges for specific services, I believe an integrated management approach is essential at this time, due to the scale of change and opportunity presenting itself.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Francis-Davies', written in a cursive style.

COUNCILLOR ROBERT FRANCIS-DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR INVESTMENT, REGENERATION & TOURISM