

To:
Councillor Rob Stewart
Cabinet Member for Economy,
Finance and Strategy

Please ask for:
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Direct Line:
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Date
Dyddiad:

Overview & Scrutiny

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23rd March 2020

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy following the meeting of the Panel on 2nd March 2021. It covers the Project Update Report.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

We would like to thank you, Councillor Francis-Davies, Martin Nicholls, Ben Smith, Phil Holmes and Huw Mowbray for attending to present this item and respond to the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

Dashboard Report

We received the usual monitoring update on the regeneration projects in Swansea. We are pleased by the progress on these projects overall but we do have some observations we would like to share with you.

Copr Bay

We heard that the construction element is going well, subject to slight delays due to pandemic restrictions. The Arena is now watertight, and the golden cladding is set to go on in preparation for LEDs. The Cultural Services team is now looking at how

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best to programme LED elements of the Arena. The new bridge is scheduled to be lifted into place over the coming days.

We heard that, regarding the Hotel development, the Council remain in discussions with the Welsh Government funding team about the next steps here.

We heard that the cladding / tiling is complete on the residential development and a show flat has been created by Buckingham. This has been praised by Pobl and gives a clear indication of space and layout. We understand that occupancy by Pobl is expected in September 2021.

We heard that there has been a positive response to the marketing of small units around the Arena – we understand details are still confidential, but that the Council is in discussions with a number of prospective local operators. You clarified use of these units as not being 'pop-up' but fully in-built units, targeted at local traders and larger units being a mixture of local and national traders.

We queried specific City Deal funding amounts and whether the second tranche has been received. You assured us that this funding was flowing through, and anticipate a positive impact on the funding profile. The Chief Finance Officer also confirmed that sums have not yet been physically received, but are due by the end of the year. Members went on to query if £1.3M per £18M has been confirmed for Swansea. The Council is continuing with building and construction projects and we understand that officers expect the figure to be significantly more than £1.3M.

Swansea Central North

We heard that discussions are continuing regarding a Public Sector Hub. New developments are being looked at by Government operators, and officers expect announcements in due course. In terms of capacity, officers confirmed Swansea could house in the region of a thousand people within an office building, a variety of sites being available for this purpose, holding a substantial number of staff. There is potential for additional private sector occupiers as another positive aspect to this investment. Officers explained that there has been significant interest from UK Government departments and Welsh Government departments alike. It was pleasing to hear about the aim for a clustering of well-paid employment and long-term jobs.

The Kingsway

We heard that some drainage channels have been badly fitted by the previous contractor, and work is underway to put this right during this period of lower traffic

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flow. We understand that defective work is covered by a bond from the previous contractor, which is likely to cover the majority of work needed.

In relation to 71/72 The Kingsway, officers explained to us that clarifications were needed on the tender and are now being analysed by the team. We understand this may lead to a potential Cabinet report in due course, in terms of the costs aspects of the tender.

Wind Street

We heard that regarding the development of Wind Street, stakeholder meetings are not particularly well attended, although there have been some individual discussions with current occupiers about the hospitality aspect outside buildings. Discussions with operators have led to a clear requirement for these areas to be located directly next to the buildings.

Discussions have also been held with access groups, resulting in tactile pavement added into designs. The Police have been part of the consultation process, and also the Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU), who are content with the Wind Street proposals. We heard that counter terrorism aspects were also taken into account in design of either end of the street; the panel queried whether counter terrorism is now a standard consultee in all schemes. It was reassuring to hear that their input has been critical on other developments also, minimising terror threats. We heard that engagement of advisers is necessary at an early stage to design-in various ways of mitigating risk.

Shaping Swansea

We heard that there have been follow up meetings with other council colleagues and generally a wide council involvement in this area. Officers explained that the quality of bids has resulted from good PR messages regarding the Arena, in competition with many other cities. It was promising to hear that the Arena is likely to be a catalyst for further schemes and will generate further investment.

Repurposing Swansea

We heard that the Council is looking at the core areas of the city centre to ensure Swansea is moving forward and we can put the right interventions in place to help recovery, taking into account the difficult economic situation across the UK. Officers explained the need for anchorage in the Quadrant. A design masterplan remains in the early stages and BDP have been appointed as designers, with more announcements on plans expected over the coming months.

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Officer groups will initially work with the team appointed, leading to a strategic revised masterplan and a new action plan looking to deliver objectives. We understand this will be largely funded by Welsh Government.

The Panel queried if there will be opportunities for member input as we would like involvement in this important work. Officers explained that workshops are likely during this process, although this is time limited and needs to be finished by the end of this financial year. We look forward to hearing further updates regarding this work.

Palace Theatre

It was pleasing to hear that the project is making good progress with expected completion due June 2022. We heard that planning approval has been received and the listed building status application has been made. We understand the Council is in discussions with a potential tenant.

Powerhouse

We heard that officers are attending regular meetings with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) as the main funder. Contractors have requested extensions of time due to Covid issues, however the Council has granted a part extension of time.

We heard that there has been a huge amount of archaeology discovered in the ground, which has been a challenge to deal with. Officers explained that although there are complications here, now the issues are known the team can plan ahead. We understand there are three listed buildings being worked on, eleven in total on the site, having great potential to add to the destination. We acknowledged the hard work and efforts of all involved in this project.

We questioned whether there was any update on the Pontoons project. Officers explained that funding bids have been made, looking to connect the City Centre up to the Stadium and beyond the bascule bridge.

Your response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, but in this instance, please provide a formal written response by 14th April 2021 to the following:

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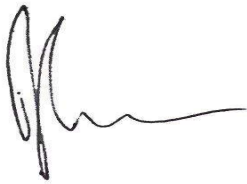
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- Please provide a breakdown of information in relation to funding sources for each project on the Dashboard Report.
- The panel would like further information about the new plans for *Repurposing Swansea*, including information on how/when members can be involved in this process.

Yours Sincerely,



Councillor Jeff Jones
Convener, Development and Regeneration Performance Panel
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