

Report

Cabinet



Part 1

Date: 19 July 2017

Subject Newport: City of Democracy

Purpose To outline the proposal to promote Newport as the “City of Democracy”

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Ward City-wide

Summary This report outlines the proposal to promote Newport as the “City of Democracy”. It identifies three strands of activity to underpin this work and the need to engage with partners cross the city to secure commitment to the programme of work. The report also sets out the requirement to allocate some funding to take this initiative forward.

Proposal To agree:

- 1) To adopt the headline “City of Democracy” for city branding for use in council publications and media.
- 2) To support the establishment of a festival of democracy to be held in Newport.
- 3) To explore further ideas for engaging communities in critical decision making across the city
- 4) To allocate funding of £100,000 to this initiative.

Action by Will Godfrey, Chief Executive and Beverly Owen, Strategic Director Place

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Leader of the Council
- Cabinet Member for Community and Resources
- Head of Finance
- Head of Law and Regulation

Signed

Background

During 2016 the Newport Economic Network, the advisory group on economic growth, held a number of discussions about the need to develop a coherent story for Newport which could become the basis of city branding as well as the ongoing focus for collective advocacy for the city. The consensus of the group was the need to find a unique proposition which respects the history of the city whilst also having relevance for our present challenges and future opportunities.

Following these discussions the council agreed to commission work to explore how the “City of Democracy” concept could be developed. ResPublica, an independent think tank led by Phillip Blond, undertook this work and produced a comprehensive report which is attached at appendix 1. The report provided the focus of the Newport city summit in November 2016 and has attracted widespread support from numerous partners across the city.

The report identifies three strands of activity which underpin the concept:

- 1: City branding - helping to articulate a sense of unique and authentic difference that can make a city stand out in an increasingly competitive world.
- 2: Events - The development of cultural events and institutions to attract visitors and investors has been a central feature of urban planning in many metropolitan cities in the UK and internationally. This report sets out the proposal to develop a “Festival of Democracy” to be held in Newport.
- 3: Social & economic engagement with citizens and communities - Newport as ‘City of Democracy’ offers the promise of a shared future that can counter the effects of fragmented communities and refashion a mutual understanding of economics, politics and an enfranchised society

The ResPublica report outlines 10 recommendations to bring the City of Democracy concept into reality and these recommendations are the focus of the remainder of this report.

City of Democracy – Turning the concept into reality

The ResPublica report provides a detailed assessment of how the concept can be brought to life. The challenge is to create an authentic narrative which the council, partners and communities feel properly reflects the core story of Newport as well as providing a convincing basis for future communications and activities to promote the city.

To concept was initially tested with partners who form the Newport Economic Network. This is an advisory body, set up in 2015, to discuss how we can take a collective approach to city development. This group has a wide range of representatives – schools, further and higher education, industry, tourism, sport, housing association and government. As such it is well placed to consider the need to create a better sense of place and how we can then work together to secure the best outcomes for the city.

Partners from the network support the concept and the feedback from the city summit in November 2016 was overwhelmingly positive.

There is clear evidence that the cities which attract greatest levels of investment and therefore those which create the best opportunities for their communities are the ones where partners across the city come together to tell a coherent story and commit time, effort and resource to work collectively. Inevitably this is not without its challenges as different organisations will have individual interests. However if we are to create economic growth and develop a clear sense of place we need to manage these interests and set out an ambitious plan for the future of Newport.

The report has 10 recommendations which can essentially be categorised into 3 strands of work:

1: City Branding

Whether it's to boost tourism or to help create a general sense of civic pride, city branding has become an important part of place-making in many cities around the world. Currently Newport doesn't have a clear brand. This can cause confusion when marketing the city to investors. As the report sets out:

"The ultimate promise of city branding is to create enhanced awareness in key marketplaces which in turn increases customers, generating business, employment and prosperity."

Newport has at times been known as "Gateway City" or more recently, "City on the Rise". However these brandings haven't been used consistently or been derived from any city wide process. The "City of Democracy" branding has been endorsed by the Newport Economic Network and provides the opportunity for the first time to have a coherent basis for marketing, place shaping and inward investment.

This report therefore proposes that Newport City Council formally adopts the "City of Democracy" strapline as the basis for city marketing and destination management.

2: Events

City events bring communities together and can be the focus for investment and improving city identity. As the ResPublica report comments:

"Festivals and hallmark events have become an increasingly important aspect of urban regeneration strategies in cities and towns of all sizes and in countries globally. In the main the tendency has been to focus on sports and cultural themed events, but there are many other festivals and carnivals taking place around the world celebrating music, literature, food, art, religion, language, and horticulture amongst many others"

Perhaps the best examples in recent years in Newport are the Big Splash and the Food Festival.

The proposition in this report is to create a Festival of Democracy, which will provide a unique focus for Newport. This event will both reflect the strong history of the city, embodied by the chartist uprising of 1837, whilst also providing a focus for debates about democracy in the modern world.

3: Social and economic interaction with citizens and communities

Once again further detail about this strand of activity is provided in the attached report.

Newport City Council impacts on the lives of communities in many different ways. One of our key challenges is how we can engage communities in consultation processes and decisions which are vital for the future of the city. Whilst we have some excellent examples, such as the Citizens Panel and the Fairness Commission, there is more we could do to stimulate engagement in decision making which will help to bind communities together.

The attached report sets out a wide range of activities we could introduce to stimulate engagement and cabinet is invited to consider the proposals.

Financial Summary

Inevitably there will be costs associated with this initiative and this report proposes to make a budget provision of £100,000 over the next 2 years. It is also expected that partners will make a contribution as work proceeds. We would also seek, where possible, to spend this budget with local suppliers. At this point, these costs are anticipated to be one-off and most certainly at this level. This will be reviewed again at the end of the second year.

In considering the development of a festival we would seek grant assistance and sponsorship to reduce any costs.

We plan to cover these costs from the 2017/18 contingency allowance of £1.47m. Therefore there will be no additional budgetary implication for the council. To date, no allocation from the revenue contingency has been made and there is one further allocation from the contingency, recommended to Cabinet in these meetings papers – making the total £175k in the current 2016/17 financial year if they are both approved.

The revenue contingency budget is mainly reserved to deal with issues of over-spending and unexpected, significant financial problems. In saying this, the total allocation recommended is relatively small and financial forecasts suggest this is affordable at this level.

	Year 1 (Current) £	Year 2 £	Year 3 £	On-going £	Notes including budgets heads affected
Costs (Income)	75,000	25,000			
Net Costs (Savings)					
Net Impact on Budget	75,000	25,000			

Risks

At this stage it is difficult to identify risks. The initial task will be to engage with partners across the city to secure support. Initial feedback has been mostly positive

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
Lack of engagement with partners	M	L	On-going discussions	Chief Executive

*Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The council is beginning the process of developing a new corporate plan and the work outlined in this report will be included if the recommendations within this report are supported.

Options Available and considered

- Option 1 – support the City of Democracy initiative.
- Option 2 – reject the proposals contained within this report.

Preferred Option and Why

Cabinet is recommended to support option 1. The report attached at appendix 1 sets out the significant advantages of having a clear citywide place shaping strategy. The City of Democracy concept will enable Newport to have a clear on-going strategy which will encourage investment and provide a focus for future city development.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

The financial impacts are shown in the 'financial summary' section of this report. Current revenue forecasts show a potential forecasted revenue budget overspend of c£150k to date which is well below the revenue contingency budget and therefore there is headroom to approve this.

Cabinet are reminded that the contingency is reserved for dealing with revenue budget overspending and unexpected, significant financial issues/problems and allocating it in this way, at this early stage of the year, would generally not be recommended given the risk it introduces. In saying this, there is sufficient headroom to absorb this if Cabinet deem it a priority, understanding the risks.

Any on-going costs beyond the second year, when known, would need to be included for base budget funding, through the medium term financial processes.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal issues arising from the Report. The Council has specific statutory powers under Sections 140 and 142 of the Local Government Act 1972, to undertake marketing, events and promotional activities. In addition, there are general powers under Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 to incur expenditure and undertake any activity which promotes the well-being of the City and the people of Newport. The proposed adoption of the City of Democracy branding and its implementation in terms of organised events and social engagement is also consistent with the Council's objectives under the Well-Being of Future Generations Act in relation to economic growth and regeneration and building cohesive and sustainable communities, and the principles of involvement and collaboration.

Comments of Head of People and Business Change

There are no staffing implications at this time.

Comments of Cabinet Member

The Leader of the Council supports the proposal outlined in this report

Local issues

N/A

Scrutiny Committees

Engagement with scrutiny will be on-going.

Equalities Impact Assessment and the Equalities Act 2010

N/A

Children and Families (Wales) Measure

N/A

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

N/A

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

N/A

Consultation

On-going discussions with Newport Economic Network who have been very support of the initiative.

Background Papers

ResPublica report from November 2016 which is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

Dated: 12 July 2017