

3 August 2022

Town Centre Regeneration

The Committee is currently undertaking an inquiry into town centre regeneration in Wales. The Committee agreed to pursue this area of work following the publication of the Auditor General for Wales's report, *Regenerating Town Centres in Wales*, published in September 2021.

As part of its scrutiny, the Committee heard from Professor Karel Williams, from Alliance Manchester Business School, on 16 June 2022. The Committee is now gathering written evidence to influence its further scrutiny into this topic.

The Committee intends to consider the following issues, as part of the inquiry:

- **National Policy and legislation that is critical to the regeneration of towns to enable them to thrive and survive** – determining whether the legislation and Welsh Government's policy levers for regeneration are fit for purpose and focus on addressing the underlying problems facing towns. In particular, the Committee wishes to look at planning policy and the Welsh Government's Town Centres First policy.
- **Creating and sustaining local coalitions of change** – how local authorities and their local partners, including citizens and service users, are managing and regenerating towns in Wales and considering whether local authorities and their key partners have the right skills, leadership, resources, buy-in and capacity to regenerate towns.
- **Non-domestic rates, town centre incentives and taxes** – non-domestic rates are seen as a burden on small businesses, but they also generate £1 billion for public services in Wales and are vital to the financial health of local government. The pandemic showed that local authorities working flexibly in developing incentives was critical to helping



town centre businesses survive. What is there to be learned from the pandemic that can shape responses going forward.

- **The availability, management and impact of Welsh and UK Government funding for town centre regeneration** – assessing how well money is being used to regenerate town centres, and whether this represents value for money.
- **City Deals and Regional Partnerships, and Corporate Joint Committees** – is there more that can be done in the regional economic development space to help regenerate towns in Wales or do these arrangements run the risk of making things more complicated than they need to be.

The Committee would welcome any evidence you can provide on these issues and any others you deem to be relevant. If you intend to provide written evidence as part of this inquiry, we would appreciate your response by **12 September 2022**.

If you have any questions about this letter or about the Committee's work in this area, please address them to the clerking team, who will be more than happy to help.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark Isherwood', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Isherwood MS
Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.