

**Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg,
Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol**

**Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations
Committee**

Councillor Huw Thomas
Leader, Cardiff Council
Cardiff Council

cc: Councillor Jennifer Burke-Davies
Cabinet Member for Culture, Parks and Events
Dawn Bowden MS
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief
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Jack Sargeant MS
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9 December 2022

Further questions regarding the future of St David's Hall

Dear Councillor Thomas

In light of the information published by Cardiff Council on Tuesday 6 December 2022, we have decided to write to you again with further questions in addition to our original letter to you (dated 5 December 2022).

We welcome the additional information published by the Council. We think that providing transparency on such a sensitive matter is beneficial to all those with an interest in the future of St David's Hall. This information has, however, also raised a number of other questions which are set out below.

We note that the Council's Cabinet will consider a report on Thursday 15 December 2022, which recommends approving in principle, an offer from the Academy Music Group Limited ("AMG") to take over running the building via a long-term lease. Although some information has been published in relation to the 3 options being considered by the Council, we call for greater clarity over the reasons why this option is being progressed by the Council, as opposed to going to the market.

Speed of process

An article published by WalesOnline on 2 December 2022 notes that discussions with AMG begun in 2021. The article also quotes a spokesperson for the Council saying they've been speaking to AMG since 2020. We would appreciate gaining greater clarity as to why this process is progressing so quickly if talks have been ongoing for such a long period of time.

Accuracy of information provided to the First Minister

As outlined in our previous letter, it was noted last week in the Senedd *"that Cardiff Council are doing the work with not just one company but with more than one company that has shown an interest in collaborating with*

the council on the future of St David's Hall." Following consideration of the information available on the Council's website, it appears that you seem to be pursuing an option with only one company, and without explaining what (if any) evaluation of other solutions has taken place. It is unclear to us why the First Minister is under the impression that the Council is working with more than one organisation when that is not reflected in documents published by the Council. We would urge you to clarify this urgently.

Other funding options

We are also unclear as to what other options you have explored with regards to the future of St David's Hall. There is no clarity on what other public or third sector avenues Cardiff Council may have sought. Given the Hall's status as a national concert hall, we would be grateful if you could let us know whether the Council has engaged with the Welsh Government or the Arts Council to see if any further support can be provided. We would also welcome an outline of all public and third sector options you have considered.

Transparency of information

Finally, we are seriously concerned by Cardiff Council's lack of transparency on this matter.

A number of documents regarding St David's Hall are included on the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee's [agenda](#) for Monday 12 December 2022. While some information can be gleaned from the papers for this meeting, the majority of them are restricted. Although we appreciate it is normal practice for documents to be restricted in this way, as there is only one offer, it would be helpful to understand why is this information restricted.

We appreciate that legal advice is subject to privilege therefore we wouldn't expect that to be made publicly available. We are, however, of the view that, given there is only offer to consider, commercial sensitivities need not apply. As such, we think Cardiff Council must now be forthcoming and open with details of the proposed deal for St David's Hall. We think such openness will help people better understand what's going on, and, with hope, provide assurance. It might also be the case that the answers to some of our questions would be answered by operating in a more open manner.

Putting aside the fact that the structure referenced in the publicly available information is a land transaction rather than a contract that would be subject to a public procurement process, it is unclear why more information could not be publicly available. By way of contrast, if the Council were undertaking a public procurement process, a greater level of information would be available including specification and contract terms.

Given the speed in which this process is happening, we would be grateful for a response to our concerns **by Wednesday 14 December 2022.**

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Delyth Jewell MS

Chair of the Culture, Communication, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

