THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF A SUCCESSFUL FOOTBALL TEAM ON CARDIFF

The City Government Response
THE CITY GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ECONOMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE’S REPORT ON THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF A SUCCESSFUL FOOTBALL TEAM ON CARDIFF

Introduction

The Economic Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group on 15 January 2002 to “gather information from other Council and relevant stakeholders with experience of a successful football team in the area, identifying any forms of best practice in the process”.

The report produced by the Economic Scrutiny Committee contains a comprehensive analysis, undertaken by the Cardiff Business School, and identifies a number of significant impacts for the local economy of sustaining a mid-table Premier League position in a 30,000 seat stadium.

The report outlines a series of matters relating to transport, tourism, litter, cleaning and community development and social inclusion issues deriving from a successful team, which provide opportunities and challenges for the City and the Council.

The report contains a number of recommendations to all Parties, the football club, Welsh Assembly Government, the media and the Cabinet. This response addresses those recommendations made to the Cabinet.

Responses to Recommendations

(1) That the Cabinet notes the importance of sport as one of the economic drivers for the City and the region, and particularly the Committee’s findings relating to the potential economic impact and importance of a successful football club in Cardiff.

The City Government recognises and fully supports the contribution that sport makes to the economy of Cardiff. Members will be aware that the Council has fully supported a wide range of major projects and proposals in an attempt to attract major sporting events to Cardiff and to make the city a centre of sporting excellence. In 1999 the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport concluded that: “The involvement of a city authority has been essential for many British bids for sporting events. South Glamorgan County Council (now Cardiff Council) played a pivotal role in preparing the bid for the 1999 Rugby World Cup, assisting the Welsh Rugby Union on non-rugby-related issues, preparing information on venues and producing the bidding material.”¹

¹ Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, Staging International Sporting Events (1999), par.67.
The City Government believes that a successful football club represents an important contribution to local well-being. The operational impact of a football stadium is succinctly outlined in the scrutiny report. But the effects of a successful football club can also be viewed in wider terms. The potential of sport as a driver of economic growth is well documented. According to one source, “exploiting the interface between tourism and sport is set to become a major focus for tourism development on a global basis over the next twenty years.” Similarly, it has been argued that “sport makes a significant contribution to national, regional and local economies. Experience shows that sport can be a leading player in attracting inward investment, both through the direct benefits it brings and, perhaps even more importantly, through the changing culture and image that it can generate in cities and regions.”

In this respect, a successful football club can play an important role in terms of raising the profile of the City on the international stage. The economic consequences of this “intangible” benefit is difficult to quantify with any precision. Yet there is no doubt that the marketing of a City can be significantly enhanced as a result of the achievements of a football team on the international stage. Thus Manchester United gives Manchester world-wide recognition and exposure, which assists and supplements the City’s drive to attract inward investment.

(2) That the Cabinet develops a framework or forum that empowers the main stakeholders (e.g. club, Council, club suppliers, supporters, marketing organisations, Chamber of Commerce, higher education establishments etc) to pursue issues of common interest that could maximise the economic benefits of the club to the City.

The City Government recognises that a collaborative network of stakeholders is required and will consider how best to establish such a forum as part of the community planning process. This will need to build upon work with key partners and stakeholders to ensure that the economic benefits that the Club can make to the city are maximised.

(3) That the Cabinet encourages any Forum established to carry out research into the “intangible” economic benefits that could result from the presence of a successful football club in an area. Such research could potentially establish whether visitors’ return to an area in a tourist / leisure capacity as a result of a precious visit contributed to the economy. Additionally, research could be undertaken to gauge whether

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the anticipated economic benefits of a successful club have in fact been realised over a period of time.

Consideration will be given to how best many of the intangible economic benefits can be reliably evaluated. By definition many of these benefits are difficult to quantify and any Forum would need to put in place a robust regime to monitor and evaluate the impacts. The City Government understands that a wide range of football related research has been undertaken in recent years, both by leading academics and by private consultancies. We believe that any support for a major proposal of this scale must be backed up by robust and reliable quantitative and qualitative research. In addition we accept that regular economic impact benefit studies will indeed be needed to gauge benefits in the longer term.

(4) That the Cabinet ensures, in conjunction with a successful football club, effective and efficient transport arrangements for fans on match days. The Committee recommends that the Cabinet look at innovative and best practice examples of match-day transport arrangements, such as those currently in place in Newcastle (Magpie Mover) and Southampton, as these arrangements benefit the Cities, the Clubs and the fans.

The City Government accept that effective transport arrangements are a fundamental consideration in the current proposals. Council officials have evaluated match-day transport schemes that are currently in operation across the UK. This, coupled with the major event experience that Cardiff has gained through the hosting of major football finals and the Wales Rally GB will help ensure that an appropriate and effective transport strategy is put in place.

The initiatives from Newcastle and Southampton are acknowledged. All Council services will work closely with the club to ensure the effective management of movement in and out of the City. This will build upon the already tried and tested strategy relating to the Millennium Stadium. An extension of these key principles culminating in a travel plan for a new stadium would be developed in collaboration with partners including the South Wales Police, the British Transport Police, transport operators and the local business community.
(5) **That the Cabinet ensures arrangements for car parking and any appropriate restrictions to ensure any potential economic disbenefits to local businesses that could result from the presence of a successful football club are minimised.**

The City Government accepts this recommendation and wishes to point out that parking around a new stadium would be designed to allow residents and business to continue to operate as normally as possibly on match days. A match day strategy would be developed through an Events Liaison Panel.

(6) **That the Cabinet liaises with the Club, the Wales Tourist Board and Cardiff Initiative with regard to the benefits of the development of “packages” to attract fans to visit and stay in the City, therefore maximising the spend of such fans in the area.**

The City Government accept that this issue would be intrinsic in any marketing plan that is prepared and will continue to work closely with partners including the Chamber of Commerce.

(7) **That the Cabinet recognises that any successful club will inevitably have an impact on the Council in terms of litter, cleansing, policing etc. The Committee recommends that the Cabinet actively pursue a contribution from the club to assist in addressing these issues.**

The City Government and its key partners have had much experience of dealing with major events in Cardiff in recent years and have learnt a great deal during this time. Recent discussions have been held at Government level with regard to cleansing and policing issues and the City Government agree that a strategy would need to be put in place with the club. The issue of whether to actively pursue a contribution from the club towards these issues will need to be discussed further with all parties involved, but cannot be ruled out as a possible solution.

(8) **That the Cabinet actively targets funding available to the Council, and the football club, in developing football related projects that would directly benefit the community.**

The City Government would like to point out that the Council already fund a number of Sport Development Officers who already work closely with the football club and will continue to do so. Work would also need to be undertaken, in conjunction with the club, to explore alternative
funding sources and grants that could be utilised to benefit the local community, enable environmental enhancements to be undertaken and contribute to community education.

(9) That the Cabinet recognises the conclusions of the Committee regarding the potential contribution of a successful club to social inclusion and community development and community participation.

The City Government accepts this recommendation and notes the excellent work that has been carried by a range of football clubs to forge close links with their local communities. Examples include the Millwall Community Scheme, a registered charity established by the club, delivering a range of free coaching and sporting activities and using sport to develop peoples sporting, education and social skills; Oxford United FC have recently launched an initiative to raise the profile and value of Youth Development, with a major objective of involving both supporters and local businesses, as well as Sport England, the PFA and Football Association.

In Cardiff Football Community Development is now entering its 7th year to promote community initiatives and activities. There are plans throughout the current season to implement structural changes and expand the range of activities on offer.

The City Government believes that there is scope for further progress to be made via partnership working between the Council and the Club, and we are particularly keen to explore ways in which the Club can further support children and schools services in the City.

(10) That the Cabinet recognises the potential role that a successful football club could have in particular, education. The Committee recommends that the Cabinet consider the best practice, in this regard, undertaken by Blackburn Rover in conjunction with the Local Authority.

The City Government accepts this recommendation. Learning through Sport is an important component of the education agenda for Cardiff. Football clubs – and indeed other sporting clubs – are well placed to put in place initiatives that serve to encourage young people to better themselves and to understand the links between sport, hard work, and self-development. The City Government is currently seeking to progress plans to develop an ICT Learning Centre and Learning through Football programmes similar to those in place in Sunderland, Newcastle and other cities.
The Economic Scrutiny Committee notes that some of its findings from other scrutiny exercises also have relevance to this issue:

(11) That the Cabinet considers the need to progress the identification of a permanent coach parking facility.

Coach parking is available at Sophia Gardens and a Transport Grant Bid has been prepared and submitted to increase capacity, improve security and publicity, as well as provision of more on-street facilities. Furthermore there are examples of other major developments within Cardiff where facilities for the provision of permanent coach parking have been an integral decision from the early stages on design.

Recent improvement works to the car park adjacent to Leckwith athletics stadium have provided designated coach parking for football stadium coaches, and on Millennium Stadium event days coach parking is provided within the civic centre and on Lloyd George Avenue. Any successful football club would need to work closely with the Council and other stakeholders to examine the provision of coach parking as part of the development plans.

(12) Notes that this Committee welcomes the actions of the Council in the dissemination of information to fans attending major “one off” sporting events in the City. The Committee recommends that these actions should be built upon, to inform the increased numbers of travelling fans that would be attracted to a successful football club from all over the country, and also to be used as a tool for marketing the City as a tourist attraction in its own right.

The City Government notes the scrutiny committee’s comments and also wishes to point out that a web site providing information for events at the new stadium, encouraging people to use alternatives to the car, will be developed in conjunction with measures to enhance the marketing expertise to sell the Capital City as a major tourist destination encouraging longer stay visits.

The Council, together with other stakeholders would need to build upon existing good practice relating to accommodating travelling fans attending major events.

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