Dear Paul

At their meeting on Thursday 12th of December, the CPB Scrutiny Panel began their scrutiny of partnership working to address the issue of young people who are not in employment education or training (NEETS). The Panel heard from a number of witnesses from external agencies including Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus and a third sector representative from the People and Work Unit. These witnesses provided useful information regarding the potential and problems in relation to partnership working with NEETs. The Panel have one more evidence gathering session in relation to this topic in February where they will be hearing from other external witnesses and young people themselves. The Panel will then invite the relevant members of the CPB and other relevant officers to attend a meeting in late March to discuss the issues of partnership working in relation to NEETs. This will result in a final report bringing together all of the evidence and making informed recommendations, similar to the Public Sector Asset Management (PSAM) report that the Panel produced. Should any members of the CPB wish to discuss the evidence gathering or the issue of NEETs, prior to this meeting
then the Principal Scrutiny Officer for Partnerships will be more than happy to meet to discuss the meetings in more detail.

Whilst the Panel concentrated mainly on the issue of NEETs at their meeting, they also scrutinised partnership working in the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme, and would like to pass on their observations and recommendations in relation to this Programme.

**Partnership working - The Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme**

The Panel received an update regarding partnership working in the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme and would like to thank the witnesses for supplying such comprehensive information in relation to their Programme. The information demonstrated how the Programme had been conducting partnership working with employers, universities, colleges, schools and other organisations to help progress the economy of Cardiff. It also highlighted some successful partnership projects such as:

- The creation of the Cardiff Business Council - The organisation to both represent business and enterprise in Cardiff, as well as the means by which business can collectively promote and develop the city.

- Working with businesses such as First Source and Lewis Silkin to attract their businesses to Cardiff.

- Working with education services to compile a list of key growth areas to inform students of potential areas of work in the future.

- Working with large companies in Cardiff to help address their recruitment needs.

The Panel were also encouraged to hear of the future plans for the Programme which included:
- A European bid to link the needs of employers with the education and training provided by schools and colleges

- Closer working with schools and employers to help identify the types of skills required for jobs in certain areas.

The Panel were greatly encouraged with these future plans as they felt that these were some of the key areas for economic improvement in the city. Whilst the Panel recognised there had been good work by schools, colleges and employers individually, they felt that there was a gap in an overall strategic plan and a link between employers, schools and educative institutions which needed to be addressed.

The Panel felt that this gap should be filled by a long term work force development plan for Cardiff which would outline the key areas for growth in the short, medium and long term for the city. This would allow schools and educative institutions to help inform young people on where employment opportunities could be found in the future, and provide training in key growth areas. Importantly, the Panel felt that this plan needs to be implemented in partnership so that all bodies have an understanding of the direction of the city’s economic improvement agenda and can work together to help the city grow for the benefit of all concerned.

The Panel felt that without such a strategic partnership overview, which involved key educative stakeholders and employers, then future employment opportunities for young people in the city would be lost. The Panel do recognise that these aims are shared in the Council's current Corporate Plan. However, the Panel want to ensure that these goals are achieved with all of the relevant partners involved so that stakeholders have a shared understanding of where the employment opportunities are and what skills will be required.
The Panel felt the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme needed to consider a number of additional issues to shape its future work, or improve upon current performance, which are detailed below.

- **The involvement of the third sector in the Cardiff Business Council to harness the skills and knowledge of a significant sector within Cardiff’s economy.**

The Panel felt, that as one of the biggest employers in Cardiff, the third sector needed to be involved in the work of Cardiff Business Council. The Panel identified the Cardiff Third Sector Council as a good starting point for these discussions so that both the Business Council and the third sector could discuss how they could both work together for the benefit of the city.

- **Greater engagement and consideration of small businesses in the economic development of the city**

The Panel felt that whilst the Programme was engaging effectively with bigger business in Cardiff, via Cardiff Business Council, smaller businesses in Cardiff did not appear to have the same level of support. The Panel recognise that smaller businesses may not have the same resources and structures in order to influence the long term direction of the city’s economy. However, the small business sector play a significant part in Cardiff’s economic development and need to be supported to access grants and funding as well as having an area to voice their concerns.

The Panel felt that it may be beneficial to set up smaller geographically based support networks through the Neighbourhood Management mechanism. Although this may be resource intensive, it could be perhaps managed as a one off exercise initiated by the Council and its partners, before being left to local businesses to sustain.

The Panel is also aware that the Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee has conducted a task and finish inquiry into small business support in Cardiff
and feel it is important that the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme, and Cardiff Business Council be aware of its recommendations.

- Closer working between Cardiff Business Council and the CPB to explore how priorities can be aligned to the benefit of both partnership groups.

The Panel felt that there had been very limited interaction between the Cardiff Business Council and the CPB. This was understandable as the Business Council has only recently been established, but the Panel feel that there is significant potential for the CPB and the Business Council to work closely together in priority areas. It may be possible that the Business Council could help support the CPB priorities in relation to crime and anti social behaviour and lobby to show business support for these priorities. It may be that the CPB can also help implement the Business Council’s priorities in a number of ways. The Panel therefore felt that interaction between the two bodies was vital to help implement their priority areas.

- Greater interaction between the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme and other Programmes, such as Safer and Cohesive Communities and the Environment, to address cross cutting issues

Much like the interaction between the Cardiff Business Council and the CPB, the Panel felt that interaction between the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme and the other Partnership Programmes needed to be improved. The Panel felt that there were a number of overlapping issues which cut across the different Programmes such as traffic and transport, crime and addressing the NEET agenda, that could help be addressed with greater interaction between the Programmes.

- The need to educate both large and small scale employers on the benefits to them, and the city as a whole, in providing training and voluntary and paid work to NEETs
Picking up on a point raised above, the Panel felt that whilst some employers may be helping the NEET agenda through apprenticeships or work placements, there still remained a lot more that employers could do to tackle the NEET agenda. Some employers may have a negative perception of young people who are NEET due to the negative publicity that they often receive in the press. The Panel felt that employers therefore needed to be educated about the positive elements that young people can bring to a company, not only through reducing the number of NEETs but also the new ideas, energy and enthusiasm that a young person can bring to an employer.

As a result of these observations the Panel make the following recommendations to the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme in relation to improved partnership working:

**R 1** That all relevant partners work together to implement a long term plan for the city which will enable educational establishments and training providers to supply young people with the skills they will need for employment within the City.

**R 2** That an avenue be found for the third sector to contribute to the work of Cardiff Business Council.

**R 3** That the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme explore ways for small businesses to find out about, and contribute to, the overall economic development of the city. The Panel felt that the Neighbourhood Management framework might prove a good vehicle by which to achieve this.

**R 4** That the priorities of the CPB and the Cardiff Business Council be discussed between the two bodies to look for areas of consensus. Then work be undertaken to explore and how they can work together effectively to help progress these priorities.
R 5 Communication between the Thriving and Prosperous Economy Programme and other relevant Programmes be improved to help address cross cutting areas such as transport, crime and NEETs.

R 6 That efforts are made to sell the benefits of working with Young people who NEET to employers so that any negative perception they may have is challenged.

Meeting dates, responses and Programme updates.

The Panel would like the thank the CPB for its comprehensive update regarding the previous engagement recommendations. The Panel felt that the progress was positive and was particularly impressed with the engagement directory, and will be pro active in publicising its availability as an excellent tool for organisations and individuals working within Cardiff.

The next meeting of the CPB scrutiny Panel will be on Tuesday February the 18th from 3pm – 6pm. The agenda for this meeting is very full as there will be a number of external witnesses attending to give evidence about NEETs as well as young people providing their own personal experiences. The Panel therefore feel that there would not be appropriate time for scrutiny of Partnership Programme scrutiny. The Panel would however appreciate a written update from the recommendations in relation to Business Intelligence from their November 2012 meeting (attached).

I look forward to hearing your response to our observations and recommendations.

Yours sincerely

Mark Brace – Vice Chair of the CPB Scrutiny Panel