



Summary of an Inquiry Report of the:
Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

COMMUNITY SPORT IN CARDIFF: REGIONAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS SUMMARY

January 2022



Cardiff Council

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FOREWORD

Regular physical activity is important to improve health and wellbeing and enhance the overall quality of life. Community Sport plays a vital role in helping people be physically active and this Inquiry also heard it helps increase community cohesion, tackle anti-social behaviour and crime, as well as assist lifelong learning.

Cardiff is fortunate to have a dedicated, enthusiastic team of volunteers who support over 400 community sports clubs in the city. We also benefit from an innovative Joint Venture between Cardiff Council and Cardiff Metropolitan University, enabling Sport Cardiff to work with partners to create opportunities for people to get involved in sport. This Committee has regularly received update reports on Sport Cardiff, focusing specifically on progress with increasing participation particularly amongst under-represented groups. We have been pleased to note success in these areas.

Members decided to undertake this Inquiry due to concerns raised with the Committee that proposals for Regional Sport Partnerships could undermine the successful work in Cardiff. We entered the Inquiry with an open mind, aiming to learn lessons from the early adopter Sport North Wales and identify what Cardiff Council needed to do to prepare for changes.

We heard from Cardiff Metropolitan University, Sport Cardiff, and Sport Wales, as well as from Councillor Bradbury, Cabinet Member – Culture and Leisure, and senior officers. We are grateful to all witnesses for their willingness to engage, their openness and clarity regarding their perspectives on proposals. We also invited representatives from the other local authorities in the proposed Central South Regional Sport Partnership (RSP) to contribute their views to the Inquiry. Regrettably, they felt unable to contribute at this stage, as they awaited clarification from Sport Wales on key aspects of proposals.

Having considered all the evidence, this Inquiry concludes the proposed Central South RSP poses a very real threat to the good practice currently embedded in Cardiff. We are sure that this is not the intention of Sport Wales, which wishes to see enhanced participation across Wales and particularly in the most disadvantaged communities.

Our clear preference is for the status quo to be maintained; our current approach delivers, boosting engagement and participation for the most disadvantaged. However, if maintaining the status quo is not feasible, then it is essential to reduce the footprint of the RSP and to clarify governance arrangements. The need for engagement with politicians is critical, and this Inquiry was pleased to note willingness from all parties to participate in this.

I would like to thank Cllr Iona Gordon for her contributions to this Inquiry and our Principal Scrutiny Officer, Angela Holt, for her professional support in bringing all of this together.

This is my last Inquiry Report as Chair of this Committee and I would like to thank members of my committee, past and present, for the way they have supported me during my period as Chair, as well as the Scrutiny Officers who have made everything possible.

For scrutiny to be effective, there needs to be a willingness from the administration to engage with us and to consider us a critical friend. As far as my committee is concerned, this has indeed been the case, with Cabinet Members and Officers eagerly engaging with us and responding positively to our observations and recommendations.

We are fortunate in Cardiff to have an extremely efficient and professional Scrutiny Service that leads the way in how it supports scrutiny in Cardiff. I hope that future administrations recognise this fact and continue to provide Scrutiny with the support it needs in order to continue to deliver effective scrutiny.



Chair, Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

February 2020

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To explore Sport Wales’s proposed Central South Community Sport and Activity programme to understand:
 - Progress to date re development of regional model
 - Proposed structure, governance, funding, and operation of regional model
 - Interface between community sports and the regional model
 - What success will look like.
- To consider the pilot Community Sport and Activity programme in North Wales:
 - Understand lessons learnt during the pilot
 - Identify lessons relevant to Central South
- To use the information gathered during the inquiry to:
 - undertake a SWOT analysis of the proposed Central South Community Sport and Activity programme
 - identify what Cardiff Council needs to do to prepare.
- To gather stakeholders’ views regarding the above, including partners, other local authorities included in Central South and relevant Cabinet Members and Cardiff Council officers.
- To make evidence-based recommendations to Cabinet regarding the Sport Wales Community Sport and Activity programme.

APPROACH TAKEN

- M1. Members undertook this Inquiry during November and December 2021.
- M2. Members received evidence from the following internal stakeholders who attended question & answer sessions and contributed to a panel discussion:
- Cllr Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member – Culture & Leisure
 - Neil Hanratty – Director of Economic Development
 - Steve Morris – Operational Manager – Sport, Leisure and Development.
- M3. Members also received evidence from the following external stakeholders:
- Laura Williams – Assistant Director of Sport, Physical Activity & Health, Cardiff Metropolitan University
 - Ben O’Connell – Director of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University
 - Brian Davies – Acting Chief Executive, Sport Wales
 - Graham Williams – Director, Sport Intelligence and Service Development.
- M4. Scrutiny Services wrote to the other local authorities in the Central South regional sport partnership area, offering them the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry by sharing their views on the proposed partnership approach. Members were particularly keen to understand their perspectives. Initially, local authorities indicated they would like to contribute. However, following the cancellation of a meeting between them and Sport Wales in early November, the local authorities declined to contribute as they had been hoping to receive clarity from Sport Wales on the current status of the regional partnership approach before commenting and, lacking this, felt that their comments would not be meaningful or helpful.
- M5. To inform the Inquiry, Members were provided with information detailing the policy context, directions from Welsh Government, and Sport Wales publications relevant to Regional Sport Partnerships.
- M6. The evidence has been used to identify suitable findings from the Inquiry.

KEY FINDINGS

Reasons for Regional Sport Partnerships

KF1. The Welsh Government requires Sport Wales to maximise its contribution to achieving the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015, with specified outcomes to boost activity for all and increase participation by those most in need or disadvantaged. Evidence indicates that women and girls, those with a disability, who live in poverty or who are from a BAME background are much less likely to be active or participate in sport more than 3 times a week.

KF2. In response to this, Sport Wales undertook comprehensive engagement to inform its new Vision for Sport. To deliver this vision, Sport Wales looked at regional sport partnership models used in England, Scotland, and New Zealand and developed a modified model they believe to be best suited for Wales. Following a business case analysis, Sport Wales proposed to split Wales into five regions, with Cardiff included in the Central South Regional Sport Partnership along with Bridgend, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the Vale of Glamorgan.

KF3. Regional Sport Partnerships are the mechanism through which Sport Wales will direct its funding of community sport in a long-term approach. Sport Wales estimate that resource per Regional Sport Partnership will be circa £12million over 5 years.

Rationale for Regional Sport Partnerships

KF4. Sport Wales stated the current ways of working are not sufficient to deliver the change required by Welsh Government and that Regional Sport Partnerships can deliver the scale of change required. A fresh approach, building on the success of current approaches, they promote a collaborative, insight-led, asset-based approach and enable collective learning. In addition, they can be used to boost the profile of sport, showing its added value in tackling not only physical and mental health and wellbeing, but community cohesion, anti-social behaviour, crime, skills development, and lifelong learning.

KF5. In addition, Sport Wales believe Regional Sport Partnerships enable the development of one plan for a region, which will assist partnership working and the ability to lever in additional funds, as well as the ability to remain focused on the local level, in terms of

engaging local communities and people and targeting investment creatively to provide the right delivery of services. In addition, they provide the opportunity to align resources and thus enhance funding, as well as the opportunity to take greater ownership of National Lottery funding.

KF6. Ultimately, Sport Wales stated Regional Sport Partnerships bring the opportunity to boost activity and increase participation. Members heard the need for this has been compounded by the impact of the covid pandemic.

KF7. The process of establishing Regional Sport Partnerships has commenced. Sport North Wales is live, with work advanced in Dyfed, Powys, and Gwent. In the Central South area, an Expression of Interest has been submitted by a loose consortium of all five local authorities, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the two local health boards and Cardiff Metropolitan University, with the latter as the lead organisation. The Expression of Interest is non-binding.

KF8. Other witnesses to the Inquiry did not articulate many of the benefits detailed above but agreed, when prompted by Members, that the partnerships would enable partners to share and learn from one another, albeit that some witnesses questioned whether a whole new entity is required to achieve this.

Concerns about Regional Sport Partnerships

KF9. The Inquiry found that there was recognition amongst witnesses of the need for change, with sport in Wales facing decreased resources due to reductions in overall government funding. However, the Inquiry also found several concerns about the proposed Regional Sport Partnerships. These concerns centred on the overall model, implementation process and the potential impact of regional sport partnerships.

Overall Model – governance and footprint

KF10. Regarding the overall model, the Inquiry found concerns about governance and the proposed regional footprint. Sport Wales has deliberately not provided a governance framework to enable partnerships to self-determine the best structure for their area. However, the Inquiry found that the lack of a governance framework is anxiety-inducing for participants. Members are not convinced this is a workable approach for every area in Wales, particularly an area such as Central South that has numerous contributors to the

Regional Sport Partnership. Therefore, **this Inquiry concludes more guidance from Sport Wales is required to assist partners determine the best governance arrangements.**

KF11. The Inquiry also heard concerns regarding decision-making in Regional Sports Partnerships being based on one equal vote, which could result in funding moving from some of the most deprived communities in Cardiff if other members of the partnership prioritised other needs. **To avoid this, this Inquiry concludes it makes sense for decision making to recognise the populations of the areas involved and to ratio votes accordingly.**

KF12. Regarding the regional footprint, concerns expressed included that the area covered is too large and too diverse to work cohesively in one partnership. Central South covers an area where circa 1 million people live, which witnesses are concerned makes it too large to deliver appropriately targeted local programmes of community sport, needed to boost engagement and participation. In addition, the five local authority areas are diverse, with differing challenges and barriers facing their populations in becoming active and engaged in community sport. Concerns were expressed to the Inquiry that the Regional Sports Partnership may find it difficult to allocate reducing resources to equally valid but different priorities. **This could result in communities in Cardiff receiving a reduced service compared to current provision, with reduced engagement and participation, the direct opposite of the cited aims of regional sport partnerships.**

KF13. Sport Wales clarified that they would hold regional partners to account to ensure citizens needs are fairly met, using a range of data to ensure this. Sport Wales added that they see Regional Sport Partnerships as an opportunity for Cardiff to lead on BAME work and bring their insight, knowledge, and local intelligence to bear. They also highlighted that work in the early adopter, Sport North Wales, showed the need to have evidence-based discussions regarding specific needs and to work across the partnership to build commitment to meeting these needs.

KF14. The Inquiry also heard concerns that the partnership would prove unworkable as it covers two local health board areas and cuts across the existing sports landscape. The local health boards have different priorities and approaches, based on meeting the diverse needs of their populations, meaning Central South would need to develop two, separate

plans, which would create a divide. Sport Wales confirmed that Central South has raised the issue of how to coordinate across the two Health Board areas and that they are aware of views that it would be better to adapt the regional model, perhaps splitting it into two based on the Health Board areas. They highlighted there is also the option of creating sub-partnerships within the overall partnership.

KF15. Regarding the existing sporting landscape, the Inquiry heard that community sports provision benefits from relationships formed with elite sporting clubs in a local area. The proposed Central South Regional Sport Partnership cuts across some of the areas covered by elite sporting clubs, which may make it more complex to manage the interface between elite and community sport, to the detriment of provision.

KF16. Having considered the above concerns and Sport Wales's response, **the Inquiry concludes that, in an environment of reducing resources, it will be difficult to balance priorities across such a diverse region, as all are valid priorities with strong evidence bases.** This view is borne out by the differing agendas adopted by the two health boards that aim to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their populations. **Members therefore have a real concern that there will be a dilution of what we currently do in Cardiff, which cannot be allowed to happen, for the individuals this will affect, their communities, the overall wellbeing of Cardiff and the knock-on costs to public services, such as health, if preventative measures such as community sports are reduced.**

KF17. The Inquiry finds that the concerns about the proposed model and footprint are a real block in moving forward with the Central South Regional Sport Partnership. It is clear that there is an unwillingness to commit to a Partnership with the current regional footprint. These points, plus the fact that community sport provision will be further impacted by the fact the footprint stretches across existing networks between elite and community sport provision, means that **this Inquiry concludes it would be best to not adopt the regional model but, if we must, then it is advisable to adapt the regional model.**

KF18. The Inquiry heard evidence that Sport Wales recognises there is ongoing debate regarding regional footprints, and that the original Dyfed Powys area has been split following concerns expressed by participants. The Inquiry believes it should be possible for Sport Wales to do the same for Central South area as they have for Dyfed Powys,

which would result in seven Regional Sport Partnerships across Wales, still enabling economies of scale to be realised.

Implementation Process

KF19. The Inquiry heard concerns from witnesses about the lack of political oversight and input into the implementation of the Central South Regional Sport Partnership as well as concerns about the lack of a clear timeline for implementation.

KF20. The Inquiry finds there has been a lack of engagement with Cardiff Council's Cabinet Members to discuss the proposed approach and the specifics about the Central South Regional Sports Partnership. Sport Wales set out that their role is to discuss and explore constructive ways forward and clarified that they are happy to talk to Cabinet Members and local members, in a collaborative manner, alongside officers. They stated they have met with Cabinet Members in other parts of Wales, where regional sport partnerships have not been an issue politically.

KF21. The Inquiry found that there was a feeling that Sport Wales did not understand the local authority landscape in the Central South area, which is more elected member-led than other local authority areas.

KF22. Sport Wales highlighted that, in their view, the lack of political mandate is the key stumbling block, and that they are keen to work with partners to address this. **Members agree that political input is key and are pleased to hear Sport Wales's openness to meeting with Cabinet Members in a constructive manner;** it can only be to everyone's benefit to build positive relationships.

KF23. Regarding the timeline for the introduction of Regional Sport Partnerships, the Inquiry heard that the original timeline for establishing a regional partnership has slipped, due to the covid pandemic. Some witnesses were now not clear on the timeline. Sport Wales clarified that they do not want to force a timeline. However, those not in a regional sport partnership will fall behind in terms of delivering against the Well Being of Future Generations Act agenda. Therefore, whilst there is not a fixed timeline, there is an end of the road.

KF24. Members asked what would happen if we reached the end of the road but there is no agreement. Sport Wales explained it is not looking to divert Central South funding

elsewhere as the funding is for the citizens living in the region. Sport Wales would make sure a structure is in place to deliver for those citizens. This Inquiry **concludes it would be helpful to have an agreed timeline, to provide impetus for solution-finding.**

Potential Impact

KF25. This Inquiry heard concerns regarding the potential impact of a regional sport partnership, in terms of reduction in resources and a reduction in local partnership working and community intelligence.

KF26. The Inquiry heard the introduction of regional sport partnerships could result in national, regional, and local authority bodies reducing resources in sport, by cutting officer posts and reducing in-kind contributions. In addition, concerns were expressed that a regional sport partnership may not get the same value for money invested regionally as is currently achieved, due to lower levels of local partnership working and community intelligence. Finally, concerns were expressed that monies may be diverted from Cardiff, despite high levels of need.

KF27. The Inquiry explored these concerns with Sport Wales, which was clear that they are seeking to protect frontline budgets in partner organisations, including local authorities, and protect the delivery of community sport provision in a time of reducing resources, by better coordinating existing resources. They stated that they had made the difficult choice to reduce their own staffing base to reduce their take of the overall resource level, to protect resource for use elsewhere. Sport Wales were explicit that regional sport partnerships are not about threatening sports development teams in local authorities; they see these as key in providing the insight and intelligence that the regional sport partnership will need to properly direct resource. In addition, Sport Wales confirmed that local authorities and partners in Sport North Wales are making in-kind contributions.

KF28. Regarding local partnership working and community intelligence, the Inquiry heard how important it is to have local knowledge about what will work in different communities. Concerns were expressed that if the regional sports partnership model led to a reduction in sports officer posts, this would result in a loss of community intelligence and partnership knowledge. In addition, staff changes, and a regional way of working, would negatively impact local partnership working. Finally, a regional sports partnership would not be involved in Major Events in the same way local authorities are and therefore would

struggle to lever in the additional community sport outreach that the local authority is able to as part of the process of planning the hosting of Major Events.

Where Cardiff is now

KF29. In 2014, Cardiff Council and Cardiff Metropolitan University established a Joint Venture, Sport Cardiff, to deliver community sport services in the city. Cardiff Council staff were transferred into the Sport Cardiff team. The existing approach to community sport in Cardiff works well, with targeted work to boost participation rates for key sectors of the population, cross boundary working, partnership working with sports clubs and governing bodies and the development of a pool of over 400 volunteers to assist at major sporting events.

KF30. Sport Cardiff work with Cardiff Council and a range of partners to develop an annual Local Sports Plan, which delivers the priorities and key considerations above and is agreed annually with Sport Wales and links to their core National Programmes. Sport Wales part-fund Sport Cardiff, based on delivery of the outcomes set out in the Local Sport Plan, and have been complimentary about the work happening in Cardiff, as documented in annual reports.

KF31. The local authority role in Community Sport is important, with successive administrations having worked to build relationships with sport communities in Cardiff. This allows Cardiff Council to maximise the benefits of these relationships, for example by increasing the delivery of community sport linked to Major Events, such as providing rugby outreach in Llanrumney, Adamsdown, Riverside and Ely as part of the Urdd Rugby 7's.

Where Next?

KF32. Concerns were expressed that the combination of all the issues highlighted above would result in Cardiff being especially affected, with a decline in community sports overall and for the most deprived communities in particular. Some witnesses felt this to be particularly unfair given that the current Joint Venture partnership is working well in addressing participation and activity rates. There was a feeling amongst several witnesses that Cardiff would be disadvantaged because of issues elsewhere in Wales.

KF33. From the perspective of Cardiff, there is particular concern that the proposed footprint will do harm to Cardiff. However, Members also heard that, from the perspective of other areas, they are concerned that Cardiff will 'take-over' and that the needs of their areas will

be overshadowed by the levels of need in Cardiff. The Inquiry was struck by the fact that, whilst the current incumbents at Sport Wales are clear they would not let this happen, there could be staff changes at Sport Wales and therefore this position could alter. Uncertainty around the governance framework and decision-making compound these concerns.

KF34. The Inquiry asked witnesses for any alternative ideas for the reorganisation of community sport provision, given the landscape of reducing resources and the need to boost engagement and participation rates. The following suggestions were received:

- a. Cardiff-only footprint
- b. Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan footprint
- c. Joint Venture model
- d. 'As-Is' Plus.

KF35. The Inquiry notes these responses would lead to many of the benefits of the proposed Central South regional sports partnership without as many disadvantages.

How to prepare

KF36. The Inquiry identified the following key steps in preparing for Regional Sport Partnership:

- a. Record accurate data re participation rates
- b. Adopt 'Whole Community' System Thinking
- c. Join up conversations across the sector
- d. Avoid parochialism
- e. Build trust and commitment.

KF37. Sport Wales stated that partners need to own and develop the partnership, to help shape, grow and nurture the partnership. They believe there is a clear role for local authorities in this process; it is not Sport Wales's role to lead the partnership. The Inquiry understand the need for partnerships to find their own momentum. However, **Members believe there is a role for Sport Wales to assist in the establishment of a partnership, particularly when it is clear there are issues with this.**

Lessons from Sport North Wales

KF38. Sport North Wales includes six local authorities, Public Health Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Glyndwr University, Bangor University, North Wales Housing

Associating (including six local housing associations), North Wales Education Consortia, and Disability Sport Wales. It is connecting with organisations such as the North Wales Regional Equality Network. It is likely the Sports Partnership will connect with other regional bodies such as, for example, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the office of North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

KF39. The local authorities played an active role in its formation, with one of the Chief Executives leading the project. A Collaboration Board met monthly to build trust and commitment, and a Regional Planning Group developed the strategic plan and is now working on implementation of the regional delivery plan as well as having the ability to horizon-scan for future risks, opportunities, and regional need.

KF40. The Sport North Wales governance model has been developed to meet the requirements of the Governance and Leadership Framework and Sport Wales Capability Framework and was self-determined by the partnership members following a detailed review and options appraisal.

KF41. The Sport North Wales Partnership Board is skills based, led by a Chair who was externally recruited. They have appointed a Regional Director and other paid officers.

KF42. The amount of Sport Wales funding for Sport North Wales has not changed from the amount that used to go to the local authorities. However, the partnership identified additional resource to move forward proactively in addition to their individual commitments and leadership roles and are making in-kind contributions where needed. In addition, the partnership has already attracted additional funding through its partnership with Public Health Wales and are actively connecting with 'Get North Wales Moving'. Sport North Wales also plan to explore commercial and other revenue stream partnerships moving forward.

KF43. Sport North Wales has begun conversations about how to re-allocate funding based on need, with future programming to be evidence led, supported by regional insight.

KF44. Sport Wales clarified that a learning log approach has been taken throughout the early adopter phase. Key lessons to date include:

- a. Early identification of purpose and role is very important – this is up to the partnership to determine, not Sport Wales – need to enable partners to come together and establish this
- b. People and partnerships - need to recognise these are already busy and committed and give them time and space to operate and be comfortable with what they are doing – Sport Wales can offer some small resource to help this process
- c. Partnership leads, Sport Wales offer support
- d. Up to regional partnership to identify best way to corral partners to meet needs of region – does mean there will be some difficult conversations, but Sport North Wales has managed to do this
- e. Building trust and commitment is key
- f. Funding – has been able to draw in funding that might not otherwise have done.

KF45. The work to develop Sport North Wales commenced 5-6 years ago, with Sport North Wales becoming operational 6-8 months ago and so it is too early to know its impact. However, the Inquiry was surprised to find that no reports have been produced on the process of establishing the partnership and emerging lessons that could be useful for other partnerships. Members feel it would be useful to understand and share the lessons from Sport North Wales, notwithstanding that there will be differences between the areas in terms of demographics, need, and engagement and participation rates, as it is more the lessons on building a successful partnership and implementing the new approach that will of value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered the evidence to this Inquiry, as well as our knowledge of community sport services in Cardiff via our other scrutinies and our ward work, Members are not convinced the current proposals from Sport Wales are in the best interests of Cardiff and our deprived communities. Therefore, the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee makes the following recommendation.

R1. Cabinet urgently pursues with Sport Wales the feasibility of maintaining our current existing Joint Venture partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University rather than entering a Regional Sport Partnership.

In the event discussions with Sport Wales on the above recommendation prove fruitless, the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee makes the following recommendations:

R2. Cabinet takes up Sport Wales's offer to engage to:

- a. enable political input and to build political mandate*
- b. Lobby for a reduced footprint, either Cardiff-only or one based on the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board footprint*
- c. Work collaboratively to achieve agreement on reduced footprint as set out above.*

R3. Cabinet actively engages with the Regional Sport Partnership development process to build trust and commitment.

R4. Cabinet works collaboratively with Regional Sport Partnership partners to agree governance arrangements that ensure Cardiff's voice is heard in proportion to population size.

R5. Cabinet seeks assurance from Sport Wales that priorities identified for Cardiff will not be diluted in any regional partnership and funding will not be diluted.

R6. Cabinet seeks clarification from Sport Wales on their basic expectations regarding governance models.

Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee Membership



Councillor Nigel Howells
(Chairperson)



Councillor Iona Gordon



Councillor Jane Henshaw



Councillor Gavin Hill-John



Councillor Chris Lay



Councillor Thomas Parkhill



Councillor Adrian Robson



Councillor Abdul Sattar



Councillor Ed Stubbs

