



Wigan[♥]
Council

REQUEST 17533

Thank you for your response to my recent queries regarding the Galleries 25 development.

In the light of the importance placed in the Council's constitution on transparency and accountability, I am requesting, on behalf of Hindley Residents Association (HRA), further clarification with reference to Wigan council's constitution, particularly its commitment to openness, consultation and effective project oversight.

RESPONSE

Please see below response to your enquiry.

Question	Response
1. Transparency and Accountability The Wigan Council constitution highlights a commitment to transparency in decision making (article 13.02)	
Why has the council not provided data on the jobs lost as a result of the Galleries demolition?	The Council did not specifically employ staff to work at the former Galleries shopping centre, as such this information is not held by the Council.
Was this data collected as part of the decision-making process and if not why was it omitted?	The Council did not specifically employ staff to work at the former Galleries shopping centre, as such this information is not held by the Council.
What mechanisms are in place to ensure the council decisions regarding major projects are transparent and subject to scrutiny?	Council decisions on major projects, including the Galleries redevelopment, are made in accordance with the Council's decision-making processes as set out within the Council's constitution.
2. Public Consultation and engagement The constitution emphasises the importance of community consultation and participation (Articles 3.01 &6.01).	
Could you provide evidence of a public consultation conducted prior to demolition of the galleries?	In 2018, Wigan Council spoke to more than 6,000 residents in 83 locations across the borough to find out what matters to them as part of the Big Listening Project. In total the Council received more than 10,000 ideas. The future of our town centres was one of the top priorities identified through the consultation: town centres are important to our residents and they want to see them thrive. The council's corporate strategy – Deal 2030 – was based on the feedback received through the Big Listening Project, with 'Vibrant town centres' set as one of ten key objectives. Residents referenced the need for a more “bespoke” offer, including an artisan market and independent shops, cafes and restaurants. Residents also told us they often choose to spend their disposable income outside of the borough for leisure as the offer is not strong enough here. Also, there was recognition that as many people work, the town centre 9-5 offer was not accessible for them.
How were residents and stakeholders involved in shaping the decision to proceed with the redevelopment?	
What feedback if any, was received during consultation and how did the feedback influence the project and the public?	

Question	Response
	<p>In 2019 a separate survey exercise took place online and face to face in a vacant shop unit in the Galleries following the launch of the procurement process for a development partner for the site. The survey launched on 1st November 2019 and ended on 6th December 2019. A total of 710 responses were received. During this survey, which included open and closed questions, only 11 per cent of those asked were satisfied with the current offer in Wigan town centre.</p> <p>These results reinforce the earlier comments gathered during the Big Listening Project – supporting the proposals for redevelopment.</p> <p>As part of the pre-planning consultation for the hybrid planning application in May 2021, a project website was set up together with a community information telephone line, this was widely advertised, together with a virtual exhibition room. The Council has also ensured that hard copies of the various information and documents could be supplied for anyone without internet access.</p> <p>A report on community engagement was submitted by Cityheart as part of the hybrid planning application.</p>
<p>3. Financial and economic Impact The constitution mandates that decision involving significant public expenditure demonstrates value for money and be subject to proper oversight (articles 13.02 part3 Section 1)</p>	
<p>Was an economic impact assessment conducted to evaluate the potential loss of jobs and business prior to the galleries' demolition?</p>	<p>The Council did not specifically employ staff to work at the former Galleries shopping centre, hence an economic impact assessment was not conducted on this matter.</p>
<p>How is the council monitoring whether the Galleries 25 project delivers the promised economic and social benefits including job creation?</p>	<p>The Council monitors the economic and social benefits of the Galleries redevelopment project through the mechanisms set out within the Council and Cityheart Development Agreement, and the approved governance structure for the project. This includes reports to Cabinet at each appropriate stage of the development's progress.</p>

Question	Response
4. Project Oversight and timelines The constitution requires that the council to provides clear updates and adhere to strategic goals (article 13.06 & 4.01)	
Why has the council not provided a clear timeline for the completion of the Galleries25 redevelopment?	As previously stated, the Galleries redevelopment is a phased, long-term regeneration programme. The Council and our development partner, Cityheart Ltd, are working closely together to bring forward concurrent phases of work with the aim of concluding the project as swiftly as possible. Given the complexity of the programme and scale of the phased works, it is not possible to provide an end date at this time. We regularly provide updates through the local press and through Borough Life magazine on the progress of the project and key milestones to keep residents and businesses updated.
What measures are in place to prevent delays and ensure the project progresses in line with expectations?	Through the approved governance structure for the project, and as set out within the Development Agreement, regular meetings take place between the Council and our development partner, Cityheart, to ensure that the project continues to progress in line with expectations.
5. Partnership with private developers The constitution requires that partnership with private entities adhere to high standards of governance and accountability (article 11.02 part 4 section 9)	
Please provide details of the agreement with City heart Ltd. Including the key terms and responsibilities?	The Development Agreement is a commercially confidential document and contains exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
What mechanisms are in place to ensure that City heart Ltd. Is held accountable for meeting project milestones and delivering quality outcomes	Through the approved governance structure for the project, and as set out within the Development Agreement, regular meetings take place between the Council and our development partner, Cityheart, to ensure that the project continues to progress in line with expectations.

Question	Response
6. Regular reporting and accessibility The constitution emphasises the importance of accessible communication with the public (article3.01 &16.03)	
Beyond updates in the local press and Borough Life Magazine are there plans to create a dedicated platform for residents and businesses to track the progress of Galleries 25?	There are plans to create a new website dedicated to the Galleries redevelopment progress, which are being actively progressed by Cityheart. In the interim period, outside of updates in the local press and Borough Life Magazine, project updates will be uploaded onto the websites for both the Council and Cityheart.
How can residents raise concerns or provide feedback about the project on an ongoing basis?	Residents are welcome to submit any queries to the following project specific email address: GalleriesRedevelopment@wigan.gov.uk
What steps are being undertaken to ensure continued oversight as the project progresses?	Through the approved governance structure for the project, and as set out within the Development Agreement, regular meetings take place between the Council and our development partner, Cityheart, to ensure that the project continues to progress in line with expectations.
7. Scrutiny and governance	
Has the Galleries 25 development been reviewed by the councils scrutiny committee?	Each Scrutiny Committee is responsible for setting their work plan/programme for the forthcoming municipal year.
If so, please provide details of the findings and recommendations made by the scrutiny committee	To keep Scrutiny Members informed in relation to the important decisions that are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet / Individual Portfolio Holders) over the coming months, a link to the Council's Forward Plan is included on each of the Scrutiny Committee agendas. The Committee may then request for an item from that relevant Scrutiny Committee's area, then be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at a future meeting, if time permits/this is relevant.
What steps are being taken to ensure continued oversight as the project progresses?	