



**To/
Councillor Rob Stewart
Cabinet Member for Economy and
Strategy**

BY EMAIL

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

*Date
Dyddiad:*

Overview & Scrutiny

01792 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

14th January 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy. The Panel met on 11th December 2018. This letter relates to the Q2 Budget Monitoring, the Annual Review of Well-being Objectives and Corporate Plan 2018/22 and the Planning Annual Report 2017/18.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

On the 11th December 2018 the Panel met to discuss the Q2 Budget Monitoring, the Annual Review of Well-being Objectives and Corporate Plan 2018/2022 and the Planning Annual Report 2017/18.

The Panel are grateful to all officers who attended to provide information and answer questions.

The Panel do have some thoughts and observations to share with you.

Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring

We heard how services have overspent by £8.5m but £2.7m of this is to be addressed by the end of the year 2018/19. We were told there are still ongoing spend pressures in social care.

We were told that some of the capital underspend will relieve some pressure on the capital financing charges but there are still ongoing issues around the pace and scale of delivery of savings targets. We heard there are some inroads into savings stretch targets but not as much as required. The Panel did recognise that there is consistent underspend in relation to capital budget and would like some clarification around this.

It was explained that in order to minimise the amount of spending every vacant post is now going before CMT for approval.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

www.swansea.gov.uk / www.abertawe.gov.uk

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It is encouraging that the issue of sickness is being tackled in innovative ways such as agile working and trials around flexi and core time to create a better work/life balance for staff.

Annual Review of Well-being Objectives and Corporate Plan 2018/22

We were encouraged to hear that the addition of a new environmental objective maximises our contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act under the resilient Wales goal and the Environment Act. This also ensures a better aligned Corporate Plan and Well-being Plan. The Wales Audit Office has certified the plan as meeting requirements under the legislation.

We feel that the report is missing information about implications post Brexit, we feel it would be beneficial to include this. There should also be a list of bodies and organisations who are involved in the collaborative work also included in the plan.

Planning Annual Report 2017/18

The Panel heard that the planning process is working well and that the way officers are working is proving to be a success.

We heard that the Planning Committee is a streamlined function and works well. We were told that the previous 'Call-In' procedure was sometimes used inappropriately so the newer system is more suitable. The Panel did raise some concerns over the transparency of planning applications and the level of Councillor involvement not being as high as it could be. The Panel are happy that the Planning Annual Report is scheduled to come to the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel for annual scrutiny.

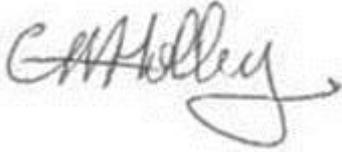
There have been some environmental breaches in Swansea lately and the Panel and the public do have concerns over the enforcement related to these breaches. The Panel were assured that any breach would be dealt with appropriately.

We welcome your views on any aspect of this letter but ask that you please respond to the following points by Monday 4th February;

1. Why is there a consistent issue of capital underspend – why is there capital slippage occurring?
2. Why is the Housing Revenue Account underspent when there is a current issue with lack of house building and homelessness?
3. Why are there such large underspends in 'Place' in general?
4. Regarding engagement of the public, do we use social media effectively to achieve meaningful feedback?
5. Could you consider including in the Annual Review of Well-being Objectives and Corporate Plan 2018/22;

- Brexit implications.
- The organisations included in the collaborative working.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Holley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
✉ cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk