



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Scrutiny Working Group - Community Growing

At: Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

On: Monday, 13 May 2024

Time: 2.00 pm

Convenor: Councillor Michael Locke

Membership:

Councillors: F M Gordon, V A Holland, L James, D H Jenkins, L R Jones, F D O'Brien and W G Thomas

Agenda

Page No.

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests

3 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

4 Public Questions

Questions can be submitted in writing to Scrutiny scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk up until noon on the working day prior to the meeting. Written questions take precedence. Public may attend and ask questions in person if time allows. Questions must relate to items on the open part of the agenda and will be dealt with in a 10 minute period.

5 Community Growing Report

Cllr Alyson Anthony – Cabinet Member for Wellbeing
Cllr Cyril Anderson – Cabinet Member for Community Services

1 - 16

6 Discussion and Conclusions

Councillors are asked to discuss conclusions arising from this session for inclusion in the Convener's letter to the Cabinet Member, or, if appropriate, a report to Cabinet:

a. What do you want to say about this issue to the Cabinet Member (what are your conclusions arising from this session?)

b. Do you have any recommendations for the Cabinet Member arising from this session?

c. Are there any further issues you wish to highlight to the Scrutiny Programme Committee arising from this session?

Huw Evans

Huw Evans

Head of Democratic Services

Thursday, 2 May 2024

Contact: Scrutiny Officer - 01792 636292

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Cabinet Members for Community Services and Wellbeing

Community Growing Scrutiny Working Group – 13 May 2024

Community Growing

Purpose	To provide the Working Group with a summary of work in relation to Council activity / support for Community Growing.
Content	The report sets out an overview of departmental activity that supports Community Growing.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider the information provided and give views.
Lead Councillor	Councillors Cyril Anderson, Cabinet Member for Community Services and Alyson Anthony Cabinet Member for Wellbeing
Lead Officer Report Author	Anthony Richards, Ronan Ruddy, Gemma Bevan, Deb Hill, Kathryn Thomas, Rachel Lewis. Tel: 07887 055315 E-mail: anthony.richards@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer	Craig Davies
Finance Officer	Chris Davies

1. Background

- 1.1 This report is presented by both the Cabinet Member for Community Services and the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing. It provides an overview of departmental work within these Cabinet portfolios, that support Community Growing in Swansea.

2. Adult Social Services, Tackling Poverty Service, Tackling Poverty Development Team

- 2.1 The Tackling Poverty Development Team administer several grant schemes that are made available for organisations to apply for. Some of these grants include for supporting Community Growing in their scope and conditions. Typically, these grants currently either focus on tackling food poverty and food insecurity, support for Men's Sheds projects or supporting the work of Swansea's Sustainable Food Partnership (Bwyd Abertawe).

- 2.2 Over the previous three financial years of 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, Welsh Government grant schemes to tackle food poverty and food insecurity that include for supporting Community Growing have included the Household Support Grant, Food Poverty Grant and Direct Food Support Grant. The total value of this funding equates to over £689,000. The total number of grant applications approved from these grant schemes was 325, of which 46 were supporting projects that include Community Growing. A total of over £166,000 of this grant funding has supported organisations involved in the development of Community Growing in Swansea during this period.
- 2.3 Organisations or projects supported by the funding outlined in 2.2 that have delivered support for Community Growing over the period include: Blaen y Maes Drop In, Cae Tan, Clydach Community Garden, Friends of Parc Melyn, Include Hub, St John's Foodbank / Cae Rowland, Birchgrove Community Foodbank, Race Council Cymru, Room to Grow, Swansea Community Farm, Clwyd Community Primary School, Friends of Mayhill Washing Lake and Community Food Garden, Cyfoeth y Coed, Blackhills CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), Cae Felin, Penclawdd Primary School and Penyrheol Primary School.
- 2.4 This funding has supported with the costs of equipment and materials, raised beds, planters, greenhouses, tools, soil, seeds, operating costs / overheads, workshops, cooking sessions, volunteer training, visits and education.
- 2.5 Some examples of feedback from grant recipients follow:

St John's Foodbank / Cae Rowland

"Our garden is thriving and we expect an even better crop than last year to enhance the foodbank with fresh produce.

Our new water butts, handmade compost heaps and drainage systems have enabled us to become greener and protect the environment, the wood, new tools and storage boxes have been invaluable in growing our foodbank."

Race Council Cymru

"The funding received, enabled us (RCC and the Hub community partners) to contract gardening expertise to develop the whole roof garden area; to design, plan and plant a wide range of produce that can be harvested throughout late spring; and to lead weekly volunteer sessions to teach gardening skills and support well-being, and the working together of diverse communities in the garden.

Growing fresh food to go to people in need and providing education and skills for community on growing veg and herbs."

Swansea Community Farm

"With the purchase of much needed tools/materials for our garden project, we can continue the production of our organic allotment, growing a variety of new fruits and veg, which also goes toward food donations. Our Fareshare food donations and food growing have successfully fed up to 25 vulnerable people and their families per week through the community pantry and a further 45 adults and young people have improved their wellbeing, gaining food skills and increased confidence through food growing and training. One adult volunteer

said 'it saves me up to £5-10 pw in my weekly food shop and is an amazing resource. It really makes a difference over the month.' A child volunteer said 'I love learning about all the things we grow in the garden. It makes me happy.'

Clydach Community Garden

"The funding benefitted 18 volunteers, 32 people in the growing sessions and 20+ members of local foodbank. Funding helped the project to reach new members of the local community and build relationships, plus support for other groups around growing, cooking and healthy food production. More people were welcomed into the garden and learned new skills and benefited from a community green space. Upskilled participants with basic growing skills and provided seeds for them to grow at home."

2.6 Over the previous three financial years of 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, Swansea Council has continued to make funding available to support the development of Men's Sheds projects in Swansea. The total value of this funding equates to £75,000. The total number of grant applications approved from these grant schemes was 32, of which 14 were supporting activity that includes Community Growing. A total of over £40,000 of this grant funding has supported the development of Community Growing in Swansea during this period.

2.7 Men's Sheds projects supported by the funding outlined in 2.6 that have delivered support for Community Growing over the period include: Action Shack (St John's Day Centre), Eagles Nest (Blaen y Maes), Summit Good (Dunvant), The Old Blacksmiths (Clydach), Petallica Flower Farm (Dunvant), Pontarddulais Partnership, and Ynystawe Cricket Club.

2.8 Some examples of feedback from grant recipients follow:

The Old Blacksmiths

"This project has been a great success in terms of the pleasure the Sheddors and the community have had from the beauty of the bulbs and flowering plants. I feel our aim has been achieved to make the outside area a mass of colour that benefits us and nature.

Has had an impact, with the flowerbeds outside the shed giving people an awareness of the project and the average membership increased to 42 and 'it has encouraged people to stop and talk, to open-up about their mental health which is what we want.'"

Summit Good

"Seeing food grow and being able to harvest it and take it home to cook and eat has a huge sense of accomplishment which is a major boost to the confidence and self-esteem of our men."

2.9 Swansea has received a total of £100,900 Sustainable Food Partnerships Funding from Welsh Government during the financial years of 2022/23 and 2023/25. This funding is to support the development of a Sustainable Food Partnership. The grant is split into funding for a Food Partnership Coordinator, and a Development Grant. In Swansea, 'Bwyd Abertawe', co-ordinated by the Environment Centre was already in the early stages of forming a Sustainable

Food Partnership for Swansea. This funding has provided financial support to take this work forward with a Co-ordinator in place and a grant scheme established.

- 2.10 [Bwyd Abertawe](#) is Swansea's sustainable food partnership and network, with over 500 members including organisations, businesses, community groups and citizens. During 2023-24, 11 community projects were funded to deliver Bwyd Abertawe sustainable food objectives, which included 9 projects directly focused on community growing, seasonal cooking, as well as 1 innovative [Goat Community Supported Agriculture](#) (CSA) Feasibility Study at Swansea Community Farm. Project overview is shown below in 2.11.

2.11

Bwyd Abertawe Small Grant Funded Projects 2023	
Big Meadow CSA	Pathway to sustainable independence. Grower salary and winter veg storage.
Blackhills CSA	Startup support for growing nutritious food for the local community. Increase food growing activity and accessibility to locally grown food.
Cae Felin CSA	Development package. Promotional engagement events and workshops targeting low-income individuals and families.
Cae Tan CSA	Trainee programme. As well as growing trainees involved in weekly veg collection events, theory and training with members and volunteers, and part of Cae Tan Grow from Home schools programme.
The CAE (Centre for African Entrepreneurship)	Swansea Sustainable Cooking, Sustainable food cooking and awareness raising.
Gower College	Horticulture and Landscaping. Practical Horticulture Level 1 and 2 already offered, plan to introduce Level 3. Increase growing space for learner developing an organic kitchen garden that will also engage the local foodbank.
Oystermouth Primary School	Ready Steady Grow! Start growing a 'pupil patch' garden, connect with food bank. Education and training which facilitates transition to circular economy and promotes citizenship.
Swansea Community Farm	Gelf Gwyr. Goats and milking equipment for Goat CSA feasibility study.
Swansea Community Fridge	Tyfu Bwyd. Create a growing space to supplement food supplies for Community Fridge customers, and increase biodiversity in an urban environment. Small scale growing and skill development for learners to grow at home.
Swansea Community Growing Network	Growing Together. Community Growing Skills and Networking Programme.
Swansea MAD	Roots of Change. Monthly food events, recipe video resources, sustainable food action plan and policy.

- 2.12 Big Meadow, Blackhills, Cae Felin and Cae Tan CSA's are members of Bwyd Abertawe and were all supported to increase community growing, and in

different ways. For example, Big Meadow and Cae Tan already grow food and supply weekly vegetable boxes to customers and funding enabled continuation and increase, including connecting with local primary schools for site visits to enable school children to learn about where food is grown (NB some visits to happen 2024). Cae Tan also supports horticulture and grower trainees, to help develop local learners into the field of horticulture - our next generation of community food growers. Black Hills and Cae Felin were supported to develop and progress community growing activity, including community engagement and volunteering to prepare the sites ready for community food production.

- 2.13 Bwyd Abertawe also funded and collaborated within two pilot projects, not directly related with community growing but in connection with farming and shortening supply chains for locally grown and produced food. The Gower Grown and Procurement Learning Journey projects were delivered and led by 4theRegion:
- 2.14 Bwyd Abertawe Network events and e-News enable members to influence and inform the progression of Swansea's sustainable food system, including community growing activities. As well as raise awareness and celebrate sustainable food activities underway. During 2023 we held 8 workshops across Bwyd Abertawe's membership to create our Sustainable Food 5-year plan, targeting interest groups and according to our sustainable food 6 Key Issue Framework. Approx 120+ people representing different organisations, businesses and community groups participated in the workshops combined.
- 2.15 The Bwyd Abertawe sustainable food plan objectives highlight the need and intention to increase and continue to support community growing across our membership, and we will continue progress to these aims:
1. Taking a strategic and collaborative approach to good food governance and action
 2. Building public awareness, active food citizenship and a local good food movement
 3. Tackling food poverty and diet related ill-health, and increasing access to affordable healthy food
 4. Creating a vibrant, prosperous and diverse sustainable food economy
 5. Transforming catering and procurement and revitalising local and sustainable food chains
 6. Tackling the climate and nature emergency through sustainable food and farming and an end to food waste
- 2.16 Bwyd Abertawe has 2 projects funded by UK Shared Prosperity Funding 2024, to improve our connection with farmers based around North Swansea area, as well as increase community growing activity and increase rural – urban connections:

Mawr Agriculture and Farmer Engagement and Needs Analysis
Initial engagement and consultation with farmers and those working in agriculture to improve and strengthen connections with Bwyd Abertawe. To assist collaborations for shared aims and assess need/s to support food production across North Swansea areas.

Growing Volunteers and Access to Local Produce (GVALP)

Connecting urban volunteers with growing projects in beautiful rural areas of Swansea. Supporting urban volunteers to access learning about sustainable food production and community growing at rural sites. We invite individuals and groups for practical training sessions on the field and offer support including options for community transport and volunteer driving.

2.17 Some benefits of community food growing, and increasing access to sustainable food via learning about growing food, include:

- Human health and wellbeing – current health crisis of diet related disease due to poor quality diets and food. Sustainable food has higher nutrient density and diversity of nutrients essential for human health. The activity of gardening and horticulture also benefit mental and physical health.
- Sustainable climate - soil health, clean water and biodiversity is central to tackling climate change and mitigating the pressure on planetary boundaries pushing climate change. Healthy soil is #1 technology for sequestering carbon.
- Food nutrition – organic, nature friendly and non-intensively farmed land produces nutrient dense vegetables and food.
- Animal health and wellbeing – sustainably farmed animals have improved quality of life and produce better quality nutrition meat.
- Thriving local economy – shortening supply chains improves local economy and resilience of local communities.

3. **Adult Social Services, Tackling Poverty Service, Local Area Coordination**

3.1 The Local Area Coordination team work closely alongside the people and communities of Swansea. The breadth of their work is wide and encompasses many areas, including community growing. The Local Area Coordinators are accessible points of contact within their communities, and as such, they are often approached with ideas, thoughts and questions that people have. These might be around making the most of green spaces in their community, how to establish a men's shed or how to access funding that can support a group which focuses on climate change, nature regeneration or community growing. The Local Area Coordination team also work closely with colleagues across the council and in places such as the Environment Centre, helping to connect them up with communities across Swansea. This has included finding suitable venues to run drop-in sessions from, or spreading the word across their vast and varied networks when a pot of funding becomes available.

3.2 Some examples and feedback of Local Area Coordination Support for Community Growing include:

Adult Outreach Engagement Officer with Swansea University was connected with TOPIC house by a Local Area Coordinator

"I think it is amazing how things have changed in TOPIC house since we got together first to discuss the garden. You have been absolutely amazing supporting this, by advertising and attending the family fun days we put on. I gather you have also been sending volunteers their way, and now they have a polytunnel full of vegetables, flowers in the garden, and the raised beds are

also starting to be used. The people at TOPIC house seem to be a lot more engaged and involved again.”

Friends of Brynmelyn Park

Local residents were introduced to the Local Area Coordinator by their Housing Officer. They wanted to give something back to their community and had an idea of setting up a community garden on a patch of disused land in Brynmelyn. With support, the group were granted access to the garden within Brynmelyn Park and have since installed a polytunnel.

The group were also introduced to the Dyfatty Community Centre Committee and helped to maintain the garden surrounding the centre. The group were also introduced to the Friends of Rosehill Quarry who were able to donate spare tools and a small shed to the group.

The group are working with Waun Wen Primary School, The Parks Department, and Brynmelyn Community Centre to provide a green space, growing activities and food to feed the community. They volunteer every Monday and Friday at the Community Garden at Brynmelyn Park and are running a well-attended Warm Hub every Friday at Brynmelyn Community Centre where people can grab a bite to eat and drink and if they want, they can explore or get involved with the garden.

A Local Area Coordinator has helped Ty Parc, a Community Lives Consortium scheme in Sketty Park, to access a Local Places for Nature, Keep Wales Tidy grant for a wildflower garden and vegetable allotment. As a result of their success, Community Lives Consortium are hoping to apply for the grant for their other residential schemes across Swansea. The Local Area Coordinator has also worked with a contact who is developing a community growing space behind Dunvant Farm Shop. They provided quotes and evidence for Petallica Flower Farm at Summit Good in their funding application to deliver a second Women's Shed, to improve the accessibility of the farm, and funding for First Aid training for staff and volunteers.

Feedback from Vetch Community Gardens

“Zara has become a well-established Local Area Coordinator in our community. The past few years have been difficult for many, Covid and the cost-of-living crisis have often added to the pressures many people are facing. For those already experiencing difficulties in their lives, Zara has provided much needed support to help find a way forward. She is dedicated, kind and caring, often attending community events on weekends, making sure people know about her work and gathering information from local organisations which she is then able to share with the people she is supporting. I think we can all benefit from having a Zara in our lives.” - Vetch Community Gardens

4. Cultural Services, Community, Partnership and Destination Development, Community Development Team

- 4.1 The Welsh Government Allotment Support Grant
Swansea Council owns sixteen allotment sites, which are leased to Allotments Associations [Allotments - Swansea](#). The leasehold disposal of these assets

was overseen by Corporate Property in 2016. All Associations are registered with the National Allotment Society who provide guidance on governance etc.; [Wales Region – The National Allotment Society – National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd \(nsalg.org.uk\)](http://Wales Region – The National Allotment Society – National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners Ltd (nsalg.org.uk))

4.2 The WG Allotment Support Grant is managed by the Authority’s Cultural Services via its Community Development Team, to increase the availability of good quality allotment plots. In recent years, priority has been given to projects that create new plots and/or bring derelict plots back into use. We have also worked with the associations to improve access, services, security, site management, recycling/ renewability and biodiversity.

4.3 All sixteen sites have been invited to contribute to an annual work plan outlining various projects, which has been approved by the Cabinet Member for Community, Heads of Services Cultural Services and Finance, then submitted to WG. We have been successfully granted the full amount requested, for each work plan. Total grant claims outlined below:

Financial Year	No of Allotment Sites Participating	Total Claim
2021/22	9 out of 16	£37, 613.57
2022/23	13 out of 16	£45, 921.65
2023/24	11 out of 16	£33, 570.11
2024/25	12 out of 16	Awarded £38, 970.56

4.4 By the end of the scheme in March 2025, all 16 sites will have benefited from a range of improvements. The outputs below relate to the total number of plots affected, including the proposed projects for 2024/25:

Outputs	No. of Plots
Number of new plots created	22
Number of derelict plots brought back into use	25
Number of plots benefiting from improved accessibility	307.5
Number of plots benefiting from improved site services	374
Number of plots benefiting from improved site security	308
Number of plots benefiting from improved site security management	531
Number of plots benefiting from improved recycling/ renewability	101
Number of plots benefiting from improved biodiversity/ pollinators	193.5

4.5 Additionally, plot holders have reported that increased social inclusion at the Allotments has had a positive impact on wellbeing, especially in cases where local charities and Allotment Associations are working in collaboration. For example, Swansea Asylum Seekers Support (SASS) and Singleton Allotment; Acre Field Allotment and Adferiad Recovery; Cwmgelli Allotment and Fredrick Place Allotments donating to local Food Banks.

4.6 Friends of Parks Groups
There are currently 30 active Friends of Parks groups registered with Swansea Council and supported through the Community Development Team in Cultural Services. This network includes 180 core committee members who have either formed a constituted group or are in the process of doing so. A further 352

volunteers support the committees on a more informal basis, for instance by dedicating time to delivering community events, or participating in litter picks.

- 4.7 Out of 30 groups, 24 are involved in Community Growing. This includes bulb planting, maintaining raised beds and planters to provide sensory experiences, increase pollinators and improve biodiversity; maintaining small orchards and woodland; in some cases, groups have established small community gardens within parks, for example; Brynmelyn Park; Hafod Park; Clase Community Gardens (Solva Park); North Hill; Parc Y Werin
- 4.8 Across the network, there is a strong focus on capacity building and establishing sustainable local partnerships. Community-led initiatives are supported in collaboration with the Parks Department, Special Events and Nature Recovery Officers. Volunteers are supported to apply for external funding and undertake training courses delivered by Swansea Council and Gower College Swansea. The Friends groups have benefited from projects funded by a range of sources including Ward Member Community Budgets, Shared Prosperity Fund, National Lottery Awards for All, SCVS, Keep Wales Tidy; Local Places for Nature Mynydd Y Gwair and Men's Shed Cymru, Austin Bailey Foundation as well as Welsh Government funding.
- 4.9 Example of Partnership Working:
A newly formed Friends group have reinstated a community garden at Brynmelyn Park. The volunteers are working closely with Parks Officers and Teachers at Waun Wen Primary, to deliver an after-school intergenerational gardening project, with a focus on community cohesion. The Local Area Co-ordinator has been instrumental in recruiting volunteers and promoting the project. Keep Wales Tidy; Local Places for Nature funding has been used to purchase resources and the volunteers have linked with the committee at Brynmelyn and Waun Wen Community Centre to also deliver Warm Hub sessions.

5. Planning and City Regeneration, Natural Environment, Nature Conservation and AONB Team

- 5.1 The Gower AONB Team manage the Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) locally – this is a Welsh Government funded grant scheme, which supports a range of sustainable development projects within Gower. The team have been supporting community-based projects with an interest in tree and food growing since at least 2009.
- They have supported Coeden Fach Community Tree Nursery, Cae Tan CSA, and Big Meadow CSA from initial establishment – providing 3yr funding packages to enable them to build basic infrastructure, including beds, water supply systems, tools, equipment, and polytunnels. Funding was provided to support training staff, volunteers, and prospective growers, with the intention of helping to support further schemes. This included training on-site, and through the internet. We have also supported the development of the volunteer schemes on the three sites, providing funds for tools and equipment, as well as funding volunteer supervision posts.
- The SDF grant scheme has provided these 3 projects a total of £195,446 over the 15-year period.

5.2 The Nature Conservation Team supports a wide range of community led green space, biodiversity and food growing initiatives. Community food growing initiatives include site specific projects such as Cae Felin CSA in Morriston and Summit Good CSA in Dunvant as well as collaborative partnership initiatives such as the Environment Centre Community Green Space project, Swansea Community Growing Network and Bwyd Abertawe. The Team have been able to provide advice and capital funding through the Welsh Government's Local Places for Nature Scheme particularly for projects with aspects that promote Nature Recovery, and mitigation of Climate Change, alongside food growing.

5.3 Some examples include:

Friends of Brynmelyn Park (FOBP) – We supported FOBP with funding to improve their community growing area, which consists of 7 large, raised beds and a new polytunnel. The area is used by volunteers and the local school.

Cae Rowlands - Funding was given to support this thriving Men's Shed project with increasing and improving their 11 raised beds, various beds, trees, a greenhouse and poly tunnel.

Sketty Park Community Centre – raised beds were installed and compost provided. The area will be tended by volunteers including members of the Iberians and Latin Americans organisation here in Swansea. We will continue to work with them to provide plants and seeds over the growing season.

Gordon Moore Centre – we provided funding for a new skin for the polytunnel to enable community growing. The area is used by various groups inc. the local youth club and Friends of the Young Disabled.

Townhill Community Centre growing project – This project is in its infancy. The Nature Conservation Team has provided Local Places for Nature funding and advice to create raised beds for veg and cut flowers, and a sensory relaxation garden.

Llys Glas Courtyard Garden – As well as wildlife planting for pollinators, this new area which serves many people walking through or enjoying a coffee/lunch at the HQ Urban Kitchen, will also produce fruit and herbs that the public can pick. Staff from the kitchen volunteer to look after the growing area.

Women for Resources - A project to create a community growing area in the grounds of the Quaker Meeting House (St Helen's Road)

Grow from Home - A project to support and encourage families living in Council housing to grow food in their own gardens. We provided tools and materials such as compost timber for raised beds and seeds.

Townhill Park Orchard – Six Welsh Heritage apple trees have been planted for the local community to harvest. There will be training sessions on pruning and potentially apple day events, demonstrating the various products that can be made from the fruits of the orchard.

Kate’s Orchard at Clyne Valley Community Project (AONB team funding) – This elongated orchard consists of many apple, plum and cherry trees. Clyne Valley Community Project manage the area with the help of training from The Orchard Project.

Glynncollen Woods has a very old orchard which would once have been connected to the old house. We linked the local residents and soon to be friends group with The Orchard Project, who can support them in maintaining the trees.

Penderi Orchard (Larks Place) was planted six trees with the Orchard Project, Swansea Community Farm volunteers and the Nature Conservation Team, after consulting with the residents.

Other Orchard projects that have been supported include Clase Primary School, Cwmdonkin Park, Kilvey Hill, Morrision Park, The Ganges Townhill, Three Cornered field and Primrose Hill Community Park

5.4 The Planning and City Regeneration Service also has a strategic role to play in considering food security and the need protect good agricultural land and to provide opportunities for food growing in urban areas when undertaking Strategic Plans such as the RLDP, the County wide Green Infrastructure Strategy and contributing to a Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan.

6. Property Services, representing the Climate Change and Nature Recovery Corporate Wellbeing Objective – Swansea Council Internal Sustainable Food Policy

6.1 As part of the council’s commitment to the ‘Delivering on Nature Recovery & Climate Change’ wellbeing objective, a council wide working group has been developing an internal Swansea Council Sustainable Food Policy. The intention was to align this with the possible incoming Wales Food Bill, but this was rejected by the Senedd last year. Nevertheless, the group have met recently to now agree a final draft, which will be taken to Climate Change and Nature Recovery Service Transformation Committee in this new municipal year of 2024-25. Once endorsed it will then need to go to Cabinet for approval.

6.2 If approved the policy will follow the key principles of:

Food Safety	Ensuring all food purchased and consumed as part of our internal council arrangements must be safe with respective regulation in place as required.
Economic well-being	Creating new economic opportunities through promotion of locally produced food. Promoting sustainable economic, social and community development. Encouraging better links between food producers, processors and consumers.

Health and social	Reducing malnutrition, food poverty and food insecurity. Reducing obesity. Encouraging equitable distribution of healthy and sustainable food within communities. Promoting the social well-being benefits of food, for example through community growing and allotments. Promoting the importance of consuming healthy food for improving physical and mental health and well-being.
Education	Increasing the quality and accessibility of educational provision on food-related issues. Developing food skills to ensure better, healthier diets and well-being.
Environment	Lessening environmental impacts of food production, processing and consumption. Enhancing and regenerating the natural environment through food production. Restoring and maintaining biodiversity and habitats through food production. Promoting a food system that mitigates and adapts to climate change and minimises Wales's global environmental footprint.
Food waste	Reducing food waste across the food system, including by food producers, processors and consumers.
Food Procurement	<p>The purchase of food for consumption is a highly regulated and high-risk area and should therefore be managed appropriately.</p> <p>Food provided through the Council's catering service goes through many checks before it reaches the plate. If Schools or other Council Departments are purchasing any food themselves for consumption, they should follow due diligence when selecting suppliers, and follow Council Procurement rules, but note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purchase of meat and dairy items is high risk and should be avoided outside of the established Swansea Council contracts. • There is a need to ensure all relevant food safety checks have been undertaken on all food products – the Council's catering contracts for example have been reviewed and assessed by both environmental health and trading standards colleagues following a robust

	<p>tender process and the suppliers are subject to on-going third-party audits to ensure appropriate industry standards are achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppliers must also have in place appropriate insurances, which should be verified on an annual basis. <p>The provision of all food types are available via Swansea Council's food contracts, please contact procurement@swansea.gov.uk for further details.</p>
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7. Summary

7.1 This report outlines examples of effective partnership working and collaboration internally, as well as with partners and communities, to enable and support community growing across Swansea.

8. Legal implications

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

9. Finance Implications

9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

10. Integrated Assessment Implications

10.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage.
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language.
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

10.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social,

environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

10.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

10.2 As this is an information report there is no need for an IIA.

Glossary of terms: N/A

Background papers: None

Appendices: None

Case study for the Community Growing Scrutiny Panel

Clydach Community Garden

Submitted by Cllr Chris Evans

I have been a volunteer with the Clydach Community Garden since it was originally set up, and in that time have seen the area transformed from what was once a piece of waste ground covered in stones and thick brambles into the vibrant community social hub that it has now become.

The idea for the garden came about initially from the GP surgery in Clydach that had the idea of creating a garden as part of a social prescribing pilot scheme. It approached the community council about using the land between the surgery and the community centre as an area for the garden and then instructed a project manager to hold a series of open sessions with the people of Clydach to see what sort of thing they wanted there.

In the initial discussion, the idea of a shared community space where people work together was more popular than personal allotments, as it was felt that personal allotments didn't have the same community spirit and lacked the teamwork elements found in community gardening.

I remember the first session, which was the project manager Neil, 3 ladies and myself all cutting back brambles and digging out rocks. From then on it became much easier, and change seemed to happen rapidly as we all worked together to build the compost bins and raised beds from scratch. Since then we've seen volunteer numbers increase, cockle shell paths installed to protect crops from slug attack, later upgraded to be wheelchair friendly paths. Accessible level raised beds put in, a polytunnel, benches, tea shed, sitting area, tool shed and much more.

The group itself has thrived and there's regularly around 20 or so volunteers that all get together to grow, work with the soil, or just come down for a cup of tea and some cake and a chat. The bonds were strong enough to see us through Covid and out the other side, which has been a real success story. The produce is shared amongst volunteers, local residents and has also been given to local food banks.

There are huge health and wellbeing benefits for the volunteers. Just working with the soil has been shown in studies to have a huge positive

impact on mental health and wellbeing, and can help reduce stress and anxiety symptoms. The strong social element of CSAs and Community Gardens also builds a sense of pride in the local area, community cohesion, camaraderie, and togetherness, and is a much better way to deal with social isolation than prescribing medication.

As well as all this, the garden provides an excellent opportunity to learn new skills. Food growing, and food security is going to get more and more important as the climate crisis worsens, and having local groups working with local schools is a great way to teach new skills, not just to the volunteers, but also to children in our communities. Some of the feedback we received from the local food bank was that people didn't always know what to do with fresh veg when we supplied it, so teaching cooking skills as part of the growing lessons is also massively important.

The Garden Committee and I would like to thank Councillors Matthew Bailey and Gordon Walker for their continued support of the garden which has been invaluable and led to many of the improvements over the years.

There is also a strong growing community in Swansea between the numerous groups that have sprung up and are part of the Bwyd Abertawe network. This means that help and advice is available locally from similar groups.

I'd wholeheartedly recommend a community growing area or two in all wards, as it can provide huge benefits across a number of social measurements. Even the most unpromising piece of waste ground can be utterly transformed with the right mix of people and the determination to succeed, and there's nothing like the taste of freshly grown veg that you've planted and looked after yourself. The main issue I foresee though is the perennial problem of funding, but in terms of poverty reduction, medical benefit and social cohesion they are a good way to reduce costs in other areas.

I'm glad to say that we've recently planted a small community orchard in Mayals with the help of the local primary school and Residents Group which hopefully will provide some fresh fruit for years to come, as well as the many other benefits.