



Council – 6 March 2024

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1	<p>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy & Stuart Rice</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member detail what the £8.315m in the Capital Budget proposals under Skyline is being spent on.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>The allocated capital budget has been made available to enable the inward investment project and no council funding has been directly awarded to Skyline Enterprises to date. Cabinet has approved future funding in principle, subject to certain conditions that would need to met before any money is paid out. The likely funding package is a mix of grant and loan and is proposed jointly funded by Welsh Government and the Council, with the council as host funding sponsor so will reflect gross costs and grant potentially received. The specific detail is of course commercially sensitive but the broad quantum of up-front public funding support is fully disclosed for transparency. When the scheme is completed the proposed investment/loan element by the council would be repaid in full as part of an agreement with Skyline.</p> <p>A notional £430,000 was allocated as a budget to assist the council with fees associated with land assembly and site investigation works in 2022-2023. About £85,000 of that allocation was spent.</p> <p>If the Skyline project proceeds it would significantly boost Swansea's economy because of the visitor numbers it would attract and the jobs it would create for local people. A study carried out by the company found that the scheme would be worth £84m to the city, 478 jobs during its construction phase and 100 permanent jobs during its first year of operation.</p>
2	<p>Councillors Mike Lewis, Wendy Lewis, Lesley Walton, Mike White & Fiona Gordon</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member give an update on the delivery of the Mumbles sea defence works.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The promenade is undergoing a remarkable transformation with the new coastal defence measures that are nearing completion. The contractor has successfully finished the sheet piling works along the beach using low impact machinery to ensure minimal noise and disturbance to the community. They are now working on the concrete walls and sloped revetments that will protect the foreshore from erosion and flooding.</p>

The walls are not only functional but also feature the innovative SeaHive design by Swansea University that supports biodiversity and creates a stunning hexagonal pattern on the beach (<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/bioscience/seacams-2/mumbles-sea-hive-project/>). Many of these are now in place and the team continue to work with local schools to highlight the ecological and environmental benefits of the scheme. The team has also developed a unique community engagement programme called 'Sea Through Time', which connects with seven local schools and includes topics such as coastal heritage, coastal environment, and its impact, as well as the engineering challenges of the scheme. (<https://www.mumblescps.co.uk/sea-through-time>).

The project has also created opportunities for local apprentices to gain valuable skills and experience in both labour and technical roles, as well as supporting the University through work placements. The aim is to support the local skills challenges and the project team are also working with the regional supply chains to help the promote the local economy.

It has received positive feedback from Julie James MS and Rebecca Evans MS, who visited the site recently and praised the design approach and the sensitive manner in which the highly complex scheme has been delivered so far. Work on the 1.2km scheme continues to be phased to ensure that local businesses and users such as the yacht club can continue to operate throughout the period of construction. Temporary diversion routes and measures have been put in place to ensure that visitors to the promenade and operators are not adversely affected. The team has also collaborated with a local artist to enhance the character and charm of the area with some artistic elements and additional planting and play opportunities. Some of the works along the promenade have been completed, including the rebuilding of limestone walls using the original material. This work has improved the promenade by widening it at historical pinch points and adding seating and planting features to the infrastructure.

The project is on track to be completed by the start of 2025 and we are grateful for the continued support and patience of the community. It will deliver a resilient and attractive promenade that will benefit the area for years to come.

3 Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy & Stuart Rice

Please can the Cabinet Member provide an explanation for the difference in timings in projected spend in the Education Capital Programme between the Capital Budget proposals from last year and this year.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning

Capital projects for schools are established on estimated costs and delivery programmes.

Although officers strive to work within projected budgets and timelines there are often unforeseen circumstances that can change project conditions, including:

- Cost of availability of resources, including international circumstances such as wars, Brexit etc.
- Site conditions, such as issues that become apparent after ground and building investigations, particularly regarding drainage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional planning requirements. • Availability of staffing in various service areas, particularly in areas with recruitment issues. • The ability to successfully tender contracts. <p>For the Council's Strategic Outline Programme (SOP) for schools, the approval in principle of the SOP does not commit the council to any funding contributions until the final approval of funding and business cases in respect of each specific scheme, and specific approvals in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules. There is overall flexibility in the programme and any projects not completed in Band B will roll forward into the new SOP that will be submitted to the Welsh Government by 31 March 2024.</p>
4	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien, Richard Lewis & Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>Will this Council be responding to the Welsh Governments Sustainable Farming Scheme Consultation.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>A consultation response is being prepared by the Council which will consider the implications of the scheme for the designated landscape of the AONB, the rural economy, planning policy, public rights of way, and nature recovery. However consideration will also be given to the implications of the proposed scheme on farmers, and their businesses within our communities so as to ensure they remain viable and any new scheme does not adversely affect overall food production.</p>
5	<p>Councillor Wendy Lewis, Lesley Walton, Mike White, Fiona Gordon and Mike Lewis</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member for Education give an update on delivery of the new special school.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning</p> <p>On 18 January 2024, Cabinet resolved that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A statutory notice be published on the proposal to amalgamate Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn and Ysgol Crug Glas into one Special school in September 2025 on existing sites and relocate to a new purpose-built school whilst increasing capacity from April 2028 be approved. 2. Any objections received during the statutory notice period be considered by Cabinet and the outcome of the proposal be determined at the Cabinet meeting on 18 April 2024. <p>Welsh Government has already approved a Strategic Outline Business Case for the project and the detailed scoping of the project is progressing, with the schedules of accommodation having been signed off by both schools in December 2023. Other stakeholders have been engaged including Social Services with regard to the requirements and operational plans for the residential accommodation, and health professionals to inform the accommodation requirements for the health facilities in the new school build. Pupil and staff surveys were undertaken in January 2024, to support the more detailed scoping and design development, and the technical team is being established.</p>

	<p>Subject to Cabinet determining in April that the statutory proposal is approved, it is expected that we will be submitting the next stage business case to Welsh Government in the autumn and at the same time seeking Cabinet approval to award the first stage contract to the successful contractor to work with the us to develop the project to final detailed design. Subject to Planning approvals having been obtained, the final business case will be submitted to Welsh Government and Cabinet approval sought to award the second stage construction contract in 2026, with a construction start early in 2027.</p> <p>This project forms part of the Council's wider vision for the future of the school estate which will see significant investment and to ensure all learners in Swansea have access to learning environments fit for the 21st Century. These will include investment in both primary and secondary schools, and will represent investment in Welsh-medium and English-medium schools. A key feature of this strategy will be the redevelopment of the former Daniel James site, involving the demolition of the former school buildings and the site's redevelopment as a modern campus accommodating a secondary school and a vocational learning centre focusing on skills that the next generation of Swansea's learners will need.</p>
6	<p>Councillors Peter Black, Mary Jones & Susan Jones</p> <p>Does the Disability Consultative Forum still exist and if so, how many times has it met in this Council term and what were the topics of discussion.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities and Community (Support)</p> <p>The Disability Liaison Group still exists and continues to be supported by council officers.</p> <p>The group has met 6 times in 2023 and the focus of the work has been around information gathering sessions with partners and community members to understand the purpose and aim of the group as it moves forward.</p> <p>As a result of this the group is going to be rebranded as "Disability Networking Group" with a focus on ensuring people are connected to each other, partner organisations and services.</p> <p>This rebrand will see a new section on the council's website created with as specific email address so people can sign up to a newsletter which will help to promote the network and recruiting organisations and individuals who wish to be involved.</p> <p>All this work has been co-produced with community members and this will be a continued focus as we move forward.</p>
7	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien, Angela O'Connor & Will Thomas</p> <p>Can the Council provide any update as to any conversations they have had with either the RNLI or the owners of the Pier, so that positive progress can be made.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>Regular meetings have taken place with RNLI and the owners of Mumbles Pier to explore eligible grant funding opportunities to facilitate progress.</p>

8	<p>Councillors Lesley Walton, Mike White, Fiona Gordon, Mike Lewis & Wendy Lewis</p> <p>Will the Leader or Cabinet Member update council on the prospects of the Ospreys returning to St Helens given recent public statements by the club suggesting they are planning to move from the Swansea.com Stadium.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with all the main stakeholders in relation to St Helens to establish if a viable, sustainable project is possible. A report is due to come to Cabinet in the near future to enable a decision to be made.</p>
9	<p>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy & Stuart Rice</p> <p>This question is about the proposal for and Active Travel proposal for Gower Road, Sketty Road, Uplands Crescent and Walter Road incorporating a two way cycle lane.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Will the Cabinet Member be abandoning the grant application to the Welsh Government? b. If not will he give an assurance that affected ward members will have sight of the consultation report prior to the application progressing to the Welsh Government. c. Also if not, can he give a deadline date for when the application is to be submitted. d. Can he also give an assurance that if the project does proceed that the construction will not result in drainage problems encountered whenever the council install a build out bus stop or other island (various examples can be quoted), or a speed plateau such as the one on St Helen's Road. e. Can he also give an assurance that any planting incorporated will actually be maintained and prevented from encroachment onto the footway or carriageway. <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. This is a key strategic highway corridor for all modes of highway users and hence the development of the route will not be abandoned. An active travel route along Walter Road, Uplands Crescent, Sketty Road and Gower Road has been shown on the Council's Active Travel Network Map since it's first draft and continued to be shown on latest review and subsequently signed off by Welsh Ministers. b. Feedback from the online surveys, emails and face to face events are still being reviewed and will be captured in a Consultation Report. This report will be issued electronically to Castle, Uplands and Sketty councillors once complete. c. A grant bid has been submitted for the 1st phase of work along Walter Road. d. The construction works would seek to improve surface water drainage along the corridor where possible / practical. This is a particular challenge along legacy streets such as these with ancient Victorian sewer systems having limited capacity and often at very deep depths requiring extensive working areas to gain access for new connections etc. This is the concept of the proposed rain gardens which can facilitate temporary storage of surface water before then gradually discharging once sewer levels have receded. Surface water on such legacy roads will continue to be an issue

	<p>with the intense rainfall we now appear to be subjected to more regularly unless works are undertaken which this project enables with the changes proposed.</p> <p>e. The landscaping / rain gardens will be designed to be planted with shrubs selected to be as low maintenance as possible.</p>
10	<p>Councillors Mike White, Fiona Gordon, Sam Prichard, & Mike Lewis</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member update council on how retailers in Swansea have fared over the Christmas period and how does this compare to other areas of the UK.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>Swansea's Quadrant Shopping Centre experienced its most successful trading period since 2019, following a bumper December.</p> <p>Retailer sales across the month increased by 17% year-on-year, while the average uplift across the rest of the UK reached just +1.7%.</p> <p>A similar story is reflected in December's footfall figures. Retail destinations across the UK saw footfall decrease by 5%, while Cardiff experienced a larger decrease of 8.7% in shoppers. Meanwhile, Swansea's Quadrant experienced a marginal decrease of just 1.1% in shoppers across the key retailing period.</p> <p>Further, according to the leaderboard below, Travel insurance company InsureandGo ranked Swansea the top spot in the UK as the country's most up-and-coming destination to visit a Christmas market with an 84% increase in on-line searches up from last year.</p> <p><i>The UK's most popular Christmas Markets in 2023</i></p> <p>Swansea York London Bath Nottingham Belfast Newcastle Upon Tyne Sheffield Liverpool Glasgow</p> <p>Swansea was also ranked by InsureandGo among the top 20 destinations in the world when it came to popularity surrounding <u>Christmas</u> markets behind the likes of Seattle, Belgrade, Antwerp, Tokyo and Athens.</p>
11	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien & Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>Can the Leader provide an update in relation to the hydrogen ferry which he proposed in 2022.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>Discussions have taken place with Devon who are due to establish a sub group to begin exploring infrastructure requirements. Further updates on progress can be provided in the months ahead.</p>

12	<p>Councillors Fiona Gordon, Sam Prichard, Jess Prichard, Lesley Walton & Mike Lewis</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member confirm if the recent police operation in the city centre has reduced crime and anti-social behaviour and if so by how much.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Well-being</p> <p>South Wales Police (SWP) Operation Viscaria is a policing operation to ensure public safety and deliver an effective and proportionate policing response to incidents of Anti-social behaviour and crime. It began on the 20 November 2023 for a 3-month trial period, and the Council has linked in with SWP to provide an update below.</p> <p>Whilst there has been an increase by 4.2% for all crime types for the same period last year, this is directly linked to the fact that there has been significantly more reporting due to increased police visibility and public confidence in the action being taken under Operation Viscaria.</p> <p>Violence in the City Centre is the real positive as it has decreased by 27.7% for the same period last year.</p> <p>For Anti-social behaviour we have seen a decrease for the City area (this includes Uplands and outer areas) of 12% for the same period last year, early in January this was down by as much as 25% but this is data being collated on a daily basis so potential for % to change during the period.</p> <p>Feedback from BID and its members is also positive with a noticeable difference in the confidence levels and police engagement which bodes well for the future.</p> <p>A full evaluation at the end of the trial using both quantitative and qualitative data including public perception, results, demand reduction and partner feedback and this will be considered through the Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership to understand what has worked well and how this approach can be continued in the future.</p>
13	<p>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy & Stuart Rice</p> <p>In a previous Council, a question was raised about the increasing number of missed bin collections. The Cabinet Member gave an assurance that this was mainly a temporary blip due to the training of new apprentices. The problem is unfortunately still happening. An example of this is where different streets each week in the Mount Pleasant area are randomly being missed on a weekly basis. Previously, the department was aware of this and would issue a missed collection report to Members. This has now ceased and reporting of these frequent missed collections have to be done from a Councillor or member of the public. The consequence is that another council officer has to not only make an extra journey to clear the random street, but food and other detritus are spread as a result of split bags. Can the Cabinet Member investigate why this is still happening please and work towards this basic service being restored.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>Having asked the Collection team about your query I have been advised that the majority of issues are due to parked cars obstructing collection vehicle access to</p>

	<p>streets in and around Mount Pleasant. The Collection team provided an example of a single street in the area which collection vehicles have not been able to access on 5no occasions already in 2024.</p> <p>In an attempt to improve the issue, the Collection team have previously letter dropped the area to ask residents to park more considerately on collection day to ensure vehicles can access the streets on the intended day. The team will now seek support from local Ward Members to request PCSOs attend the area and enforce appropriate parking to reduce obstructions.</p> <p>The team advise that they continue to send notification to Ward Members when collection delays are caused by vehicle/staff/workload pressures.</p>
14	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien, Angela O'Connor, Will Thomas, Lyndon Jones, Brigitte Rowlands & Richard Lewis</p> <p>How will this Council allocate the consequential funding following the UK government announcement in January.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>The indicative additional sum coming to Welsh local government via the Welsh Government, is measly, courtesy of the UK government's own choices and subterfuge, to avoid proper devolved funding. I am of course pleased the whole sum received by the Welsh Government has been rightly passported through to Welsh local government. One can only hope that the UK Chancellor sees sense in the UK budget on 6 March and starts to allocate some sensible and fair sums of money to all UK public services and ensures fair and transparent fair shares for Wales.</p> <p>Part of the Welsh Government funding consequently will simply enable a previously announced cut to a specific grant, the social care workforce grant, effectively forced upon us by previous overall funding shortfalls courtesy of Westminster to the Welsh government. The residual sum for core funding (of less than £15m for the whole of Wales!) to be received by Swansea is likely to be just over £1m extra. That additional block grant and the amendments to the budget proposals elsewhere on this agenda will suitably reflect the allocation of that sum.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt it amounts to little less than one fifth of one percent of our total budget or just about covers the fire increase so I won't rejoice at Westminster's last minute "largesse" to Wales and Swansea simply to buy off a few worried English Conservative Shire MPs with a sticking plaster for English council funding and a consequential afterthought for Wales.</p> <p>It cannot have been advised earlier because the budget papers for this Council will have been published before the Welsh Government is able to formally advise us of our specific sum itself because they themselves have been waiting for Westminster to confirm funding.</p>
15	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor</p> <p>Can the Council explain how books are chosen or displayed in our local libraries.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities</p>

Swansea public libraries are part of the Wales Public Library Stock consortium. Books are procured from specialist library book suppliers who assist with book processing and integrated system financial processes to make supply more efficient. The main suppliers have stock selection platforms which assist library staff in selection of titles. Ebook/Eaudio book suppliers also have stock selection tools to aid purchase, one of these 'Borrowbox' is also a cross Wales procured supplier via the National Library of Wales.

A small team of experienced and well informed Staff, over seen by a professionally qualified librarian at Swansea libraries make the book selections based on a wide range of factors. This information is also detailed in the library stock policy where the breadth of the scope of selection is detailed. We also take suggestions from customers via the council website and Have Your Say Forms, as well as recommendations received informally via library sites, reading groups and specific outreach activities with schools. Adhoc purchases are made via Amazon or local bookshops or direct from authors where this is appropriate and when not available from main contracted suppliers. Some book suggestions would be chargeable if they are too specialist/expensive, or we would refer readers to inter-library loans or the free regional Books4You scheme instead.

Every year we aim to grow the amount we spend per 1000 of population on books published in the Welsh Language and we have large historic collections in the Welsh language and recently we have increased and updated the books we hold in other languages especially Ukranian and Polish and work with specialist suppliers to procure these. We also use IT systems to help identify any gaps in our collections based on comparative lending at other library services and we can improve the diversity and coverage through these tools as well as networked activity with professional bodies. For example, we facilitated a team member in our stock acquisition department to participate in a small working group with the Librarian's professional body CILIP for an Anti-racist Library Collections Programme.

Book Display is varied but we have rotating collections of books on themes which go around libraries and make an impact by being displayed together e.g. in support of a national date or event such as International Women's Day. Staff at a local level display their stock to reflect a wide range of themes and council priorities and also to best promote good titles in the collection.

16 **Councillors Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor**

What representation has this council made, if any, to the Welsh Government with regards to the reduction of small business relief.

Response of the Leader

The authority like all others in Wales is a tax collecting agent for business rates for Welsh Government. It is also the recipient, like all local authorities of all business rates collected back as a major component of its block grant so has a potential conflict of interest. It was thus not considered appropriate to lobby for any particular aspect of a Welsh ministerial decision on national taxation for which we are collection agent. Likewise we haven't seen it appropriate, for example, to lobby about the headline inflation indexation of business rates in Wales being put up by less than in England as a result of Welsh government decisions. I am sure the Minister will have suitably weighed all other lobbying by all others appropriately.

17	<p>Councillors Oliver James, Lesley Walton, Mike Lewis, Mike White & Fiona Gordon</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member update Council on how the Councillor community budget has helped to support various projects and initiatives that benefit the communities within their ward.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The Community Budget scheme helps deliver many exciting local initiatives that greatly improve communities across Swansea.</p> <p>Councillors can allocate funding to any scheme providing it is legal, complies with the Council's constitution and the Council's policies and procedures.</p> <p>The community budget has been a resounding success with Councillors having £15,000 per year to directly support their wards. This enables members and residents to have even more say on community focussed schemes that directly affect their own local area.</p> <p>There are many excellent projects that have come forward thanks to the community budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life-saving defibrillators in community locations, donations to projects in local schools as well as donations to community charities for initiatives such as breakfast clubs. • Investment has been made in parks and play areas including fitness equipment, supporting local sports clubs with kit and equipment, and contributing to community events such as Christmas activities and trees. • Improving safety with minor footpath, road improvements and lighting schemes. • Improving Biodiversity with contributions towards floral displays, fruit tree and daffodil and wildflower planting. • Donations have also been made to support local food banks. <p>The fund makes a significant contribution to projects that make a huge difference to the look and feel of our communities. Quite often the projects are suggested by residents themselves and it's the local members that help make the ambition a reality.</p> <p>Part of a councillor's role is to be a community champion for their area. This budget has enabled them to give a voice to their residents and provide support for projects they want to see succeed.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
18	<p>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy & Stuart Rice</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member confirm if there is anyone from Swansea that is being kept in "solitary confinement" as described in Baroness Hollins' Final Report</p>

	<p>(published 8 November 2023). It is noted that the report relates to England but there are lessons to be learned across the UK, that there is no therapeutic benefit for people with a learning disability and/or autism to be kept in solitary confinement.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Care Services</p> <p>We do not have facilities in the community that would allow for solitary confinement. In our Supported Living estate such spaces do not exist and such practices would not be tolerated. The private residential sector is also overseen by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and this would also not be allowed. Regular contact by Social Workers, Contract Monitoring staff and other professionals would pick such practice up if in a community setting. In relation to inpatient services, we have not had reports from Social Care staff visiting hospital facilities of such instances. Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW) would also oversee these services.</p>
19	<p>Councillors Mary Jones, Cheryl Philpott & Wendy Fitzgerald</p> <p>Car parking in the city centre for disabled people has become very difficult over the last few months owing to various compounds. This is having an impact of them going about their daily lives. This is undoubtedly also having an impact on our businesses in the City Centre. Can the Cabinet Member give a time frame when both Park Street car parks will be available for use.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The regeneration of this section of the city centre requires that both East and West Park Street Car Parks will be unavailable for some time. To mitigate this loss, work is underway in providing additional disabled parking facility in Pell Street and Garden Street, and providing a Blue Badge discounted tariff in St David's car park.</p>
20	<p>Councillors Michael Locke, Mike Day & Kevin Griffiths</p> <p>How many civil parking enforcement officers are employed in Swansea, and how many of those, on average, are deployed to Sketty and how many Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) have been issued during the past year by ward.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>Swansea Council currently employ 21 Civil Enforcement officers (CEOs). Two CEOs patrol the Sketty area between 2-3 times per week. The camera car is in the area every day. 579 PCNs were issued in the Sketty area between 01/01/23 and 31/12/23. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide the information by ward as the parking system has not been configured to provide this data.</p>