



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To/
Councillor June Burtonshaw,
Cabinet Member for Place

BY EMAIL

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Our Ref
Ein Cyf:

SPC/2013-14/12

Your Ref
Eich Cyf:

Date
Dyddiad:

31 March 2014

Dear Councillor Burtonshaw,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 17 February

Thank you for your attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 17 February 2014 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Place.

We were grateful for the detailed note you circulated of your portfolio responsibilities, key activities, achievements, and plans for the next 12 months. It was remarked how varied your portfolio responsibilities, covering a number of big services (including housing, planning, waste management, and highways) which could reasonably be under separate portfolios. However we acknowledged that this is a matter for the Leader of the Council to consider. We noted that you were working jointly with other cabinet members on certain aspects of your portfolio.

We thought it would be useful to write to you in order to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, and share the views of the committee. A number of specific issues were discussed, which are summarised below:

Impact of Recent Poor Weather

Flooding: We asked about the impact of recent bad weather in terms of flooding and raised issues about the provision of sandbags. You clarified the circumstances under which the council would supply sandbags – flooding to council property or where highway flooding was responsible – and that Natural Resources Wales were responsible for dealing with river flooding. We asked whether in times of such emergency the authority could supply bags more widely but acknowledged the practical issues around this which you

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raised. You reiterated the advice to householders that they should be prepared to protect their properties from flooding. You may need to publicise the position so that people can put preventative measures in place.

Blowing Sand: With the heavy winds experienced in the area the issue of sand being blown from across Oystermouth Road was brought up and the impact on pedestrians and motorists alike. Your view on this was that the financial cost of any action would not outweigh the benefits for something whose occurrence was rare.

Dangerous Trees: We asked about the legal position with regard to dangerous trees and any damage to property caused. You invited councillors to alert you to any specific areas but clarified that it would depend on whether trees were on council land and any relevant Tree Protection Orders. Members expressed some concern about a lack of clarity about advice to the public and the point of contact for issues so that preventative action could be taken.

Waste Management

The committee was aware of the recent cabinet decision which is placing a limit to the number of black bags that a household can leave out for collection. The committee understands the need to improve the council's recycling performance and reduction of waste to landfill. The committee would stress the continued need to educate households in order to achieve the desired change. We asked how the new policy would be enforced. We anticipate that issues and complaints will arise in communities, such as residents dumping bags away from their own properties.

We also asked about efforts, and whether more could be done, to encourage commercial organisations to participate in waste segregation and recycling, for example fast food outlets.

Council Housing & Welsh Housing Quality Standard

We discussed progress in relation to delivering the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020. We noted that a business plan for the WHQS has been prepared and accepted by Council and the Welsh Government and that plans were on track for 2020. We asked about the use of the housing revenue account reserves to deal with repairs over the last year and what has been achieved.

Public Transport

We asked about the relationship with First Cymru and the council's financial support for the retention of bus services. We asked about how you were considering the link between poor transport links and social exclusion. You highlighted recent initiatives including a reduction of charges for 16-18 year olds and the launch of a scheme which has involved the adaptation of council

vehicles out of hours to provide a transport system in North Gower, as one example of supporting non-commercial bus routes. You stated that you were working closely with community transport providers to extend public transport initiatives. We also asked what progress had been made on exploring the potential of a Quality Bus Contract / Partnership in Swansea. You confirmed that you and the Leader were in dialogue with First Cymru about this.

The issue of sustainability of the city centre was raised and we were interested in knowing how you were planning to improve safe cycling and walking routes through the city. You explained that a report would be coming forward shortly in respect of the High Street and that you were also looking at the infrastructure around the Sandfields area. We also talked about the importance of green space within the city centre and queried what ideas you had for achieving this.

We informed you that the committee had received correspondence from a member of the public which referred to public transport issues affecting a specific community in Fforestfach. We asked that you respond directly to the member of the public and would be grateful for confirmation that you have dealt with this matter.

Blue Badge Scheme

We talked about a large number of issues which have been raised following the introduction of new regulations and changes to the eligibility criteria across Wales. We asked whether you were looking at this. You explained that the authority had to follow Welsh Government Guidance but had fed back on the problems experienced and were awaiting their response.

District Heating Scheme

We noted that you were working with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability to look at how best to implement an innovative pilot district heating scheme. We were interested in what this entailed and understanding any specific plans.

Fracking / Underground Coal Gasification

In view of growing concern about the possibility of such activity in the area we recommended that you liaise with the Cabinet Member for Sustainability to arrange a councillor briefing session. It was felt that clarity was needed about the current position and possible impact in the area so that councillors are in a better position to respond to queries from concerned residents.

Suggestions for Scrutiny

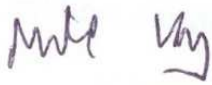
We noted your suggestions for scrutiny to look at how to encourage more residents to recycle, and also you indicated a need for a review of residents' parking across Swansea e.g. what % of a street should be reserved for

residents, criteria for determining which streets have residents parking, management of remaining parking spaces, family visitors etc.

We would be a grateful for your response to this letter. It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 30 April so that it can be included in the agenda of a future committee meeting at the earliest opportunity.

We also look forward to our next meeting with you to follow up on portfolio developments and achievements.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Day'.

COUNCILLOR MIKE DAY

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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