

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

PART A - SUPPLEMENTARIES

1.	<p>Councillors P R Hood-Williams, ACS Colburn, CRMWD Thomas and LJ Tyler-Lloyd</p> <p>The 2014/15 budget proposed £1M savings during the year, by increasing charges for services provided for residents. In March, the Cabinet approved policy in this respect.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet member for Finance, indicate those service charges, which will be set on the basis of full cost recovery, and indicate the percentage rise in the cost for each of those services.</p> <p>Can he also indicate which other service charges will be increased and by what percentage.</p> <p>Can he also indicate the savings, per financial month, that will derive from the increased charges in 2014/15.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources</p> <p>The proposed increase in charges is a part of the Sustainable Swansea Efficiency Strand. Cabinet has already approved a Charging Policy for the Council and good progress is being made in relation to identifying all possible charging opportunities and benchmarking these against other authorities.</p> <p>The general principle will be that the Council should, in the first instance, seek to achieve full cost recovery in respect of charges for discretionary services. At the moment, a full analysis of all potential charges is being carried out by officers and until the analysis is completed I am unable to fully respond to the questions posed.</p> <p>However I can confirm that the £1m income target remains as set by Council during the budget meeting. I anticipate the first report to come to Cabinet in July, after which I will be able to provide more detail.</p>
2.	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, CA Holley, PM Black, AM Day, L James, JW Jones, MH Jones, S M Jones, RD Lewis, K M Marsh, PM Meara, J Newbury, CL Philpott, TH Rees, I M Richard, RJ Stanton, D G Sullivan, LG Thomas, G D Walker,</p> <p>Will the appropriate Cabinet Member advise Council as to the extent of notification that was provided to stakeholders (ie. users, local councillors, schools) prior to the discontinuation on the 1st April this year of the mobile library service and the library service to schools.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration</p> <p>The Council Budget engagement on specific proposal (including proposals around the mobile library service and the library service to schools) was held between 11th December, 2013 and 22nd January, 2014 and focused on engaging the public, staff and specific groups on the detailed budget proposals.</p> <p>The engagement gave communities a chance to have their say on the Council's budget proposals.</p>

	<p>The engagement included themed drop-in public events for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries, Leisure and Tourism (24 attended); • Communities and Transport (15 attended); • Adult Services (190 attended); • Education and Young People (87 attended for EMLAS and 35 for other issues). <p>There were also separate events for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People (78 young people and workers attended); • Stakeholders from organisations and partners (14 attended); • Third sector groups (35 attended); • Equality groups (7 attended). • Member Seminar (28 attended) <p>Hard-copy consultation documents were distributed to 17 libraries, 10 District Housing Offices, 7 Community Centres, 5 Communities First offices, the Phoenix Centre and Civic Centre. The Swansea Leader has published details and promoted feedback.</p> <p>In addition, the Council worked with the local media to promote the key issues along with using social media to encourage feedback from the public. As a result, there were almost 4,000 hits on the Council's website and StaffNet pages dedicated to the budget consultation. The Council received 123 letters, 1,137 online and hard copy survey responses and additional comments from those attending the above events were recorded.</p> <p>Following the approval of the Revenue Budget by Council on February 18th 2014 mobile library customers accessing the existing service were immediately notified of the changes by the mobile drivers as they came to exchange stock.</p> <p>Regular customers were also contacted by telephone from the beginning of March onwards to advise them that the service would no longer be available. Customers were advised of the location of their nearest library and those unable to access the local library due to health or other access issues were offered the housebound library service alternative.</p> <p>All the schools affected were also contacted directly by telephone and this process began at the end of February.</p>
3.	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, D G Sullivan, L James, S M Jones, K M Marsh, I M Richard & G D Walker</p> <p>There have been recent comments in the Press about the proliferation of wheelie bins in city centre streets such as St Helen's Road. It was suggested in the article that 'Businesses need to have more pride in the outside of the shop fronts and more enforcement is needed to stop the area (St Helen's Road) looking visibly unattractive'. Could the Cabinet Member inform Council if she agrees that overflowing wheelie bins are an issue and if so, what action is going to be taken to deal with this problem.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Place</p> <p>Overflowing bins are not acceptable within our streetscene, and Enforcement Officers will visit businesses along St. Helens Road to remind them of the need</p>

	<p>to deal with their waste responsibly.</p> <p>The businesses need to ensure that their bins are not overflowing, and that any loose materials, such as cardboard, are only presented shortly before their collection time, and in as tidy a manner as possible ensuring that there is no obstruction to users of the highway.</p> <p>Whilst we are able to take enforcement action against both our customers and those of private waste management companies, we are unable to empty bins of private waste companies, or dictate their collection methods.</p> <p>The Authority is also due to start liaising with our Trade customers over mandatory segregation of food waste which will allow this waste to be recycled and avoid the remainder of their waste being contaminated by food, reducing opportunities of further recycling through sorting operations.</p>
4.	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, D G Sullivan, L James, S M Jones, K M Marsh, I M Richard & G D Walker</p> <p>Could the Leader advise Council why this Authority, along with others in Wales, failed to seek a share of £20 million made available by the Works and Pensions Minister to assist people in social housing affected by the regulations on under occupancy.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Reserve Funding for the Removal of Spare Room Subsidy</p> <p>Does this question from the Leader of the Independents on behalf of her Group enjoy the full support of her Group?</p> <p>It is almost identical in word, import and intention to a question from a Conservative AM.</p> <p>Does this question indicate that the Independent Group is on Conservative Central Office's mailing list and does this question finally begin to clarify the Group's true political leanings? I think Council should be told.</p> <p>What the question does reveal is the same misunderstanding of the scheme as that seemingly held by the Conservative AM.</p> <p>The Department and Works and Pensions (DWP) announced an additional £20 million DHP Reserve fund aimed at supporting <u>some</u> local authorities with the Removal of Spare Room Subsidy (RSRS) commonly referred to as the Bedroom Tax in September 2013, details of which were contained in DWP circular A18/2013. As the funding was of a limited amount, it was to be allocated to those local authorities facing the greatest challenges.</p> <p>DWP therefore expected local authorities to make bids demonstrating a convincing case for additional in-year funding to cover exceptionally high and disproportionate volumes of DHP applications.</p> <p>The main condition of funding was that each bid must be supported by</p>

	<p>confirmation that the local authority forecasts to fully utilise and exceed its main DHP allocation. It should be noted throughout 2013/2014 the DHP expenditure and applications received were carefully tracked to monitor both demand and spend</p> <p>The final DHP expenditure resulted in an overspend of only £1,213 which is borne by the Council.</p> <p>Therefore this authority was unable to satisfy the main condition to support a bid.</p> <p>The scale of activity within the Council resulted in 1,871 Discretionary Housing Payments being made during the year totalling some £575,000. All applications which met the adopted DHP criteria in Swansea were approved.</p> <p>We are committed to doing all we can again in the coming year to continue to help those who are affected and eligible for support. Information regarding Discretionary Housing Payments can be found on the Council's website at www.swansea.gov.uk/DHP</p>
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PART B - None