

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

Councillor Mike Day
Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee

Please ask for:
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Our Ref / Ein Cyf: MT/JW

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Date / Dyddiad: 29 August 2013

Dear Councillor Day

Thank you very much for your letter outlining the view of scrutiny after my attendance. I am grateful to the Committee for their invitation and for showing great enthusiasm for my portfolio responsibilities. I have found since being in my position that most members take a very high level of interest in my portfolio and its responsibilities which has offered a high level of informal scrutiny from the beginning.

I believe that we have come a very long way in the past year in terms of supporting our children and young people and I am even more enthused about our plans for the future. This Council has truly placed children and young people at the core of its work and I am pleased that it seems so many members act as champions for our CYP.

Since May 2012, when this Cabinet came into being, we have seen a significant leap in the work done for our children and young people. Our Youth Support Service has grown into being strong and focussed, we've introduced play streets, increased funding for play areas, started the regionalisation of the Youth Offending Service and coordinated a strong anti-pay day loan campaign.

We've opened a new Morriston Youth Club, a new Youth Club for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people, and we've commissioned Stonewall Cymru to run anti-homophobia workshops in every one of our schools and to turn the City and County into an exemplar LGBT employer.

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Show Racism the Red Card has successfully delivered its first round of workshops which reached over 1,390 pupils, and never before have we had such a radical and successful version of a Youth Council as we've seen in the Big Conversation.

I believe this administration should be very proud of what it has achieved so far, but nothing should make us more proud than our unprecedented commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). As you mentioned in the scrutiny letter, you attended the launch of our Rights Respecting Schools commitment which we hope will eventually see the UNCRC firmly embedded as the framework for education in every one of Swansea's schools. It will mean that the entire ethos of the school will be rights based, and our City and County may one day be one where every single child grows up knowing and understanding their rights. This is surely one of the best opportunities we can provide.

I have outlined below some initial responses to the specific points raised in the letter and I hope to get all of the requested information to you as soon as possible.

Portfolio Responsibilities:

As intended from the outset, my portfolio responsibilities are very broad and flexible. I am very pleased that it is so heavily supported by members, and I believe that its existence has allowed the prioritisation of issues that might otherwise not have been placed in a more silo based cabinet.

Play:

I am pleased with the work that has been done around the play sufficiency assessment and I am particularly eager to see how this will progress in the future with the Welsh Government.

It is also pleasing to hear of the support for the Play Streets initiative which has been a great success so far. I agree with the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee that the future development of the programme should be done with local Councillors.

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As per the recommendation, I will also ensure that I gain a firm grounding of Home Zones. I am happy to report back to scrutiny on the viability of such projects in Swansea if desired.

Childcare:

It is my firm belief that one of the biggest barriers to education and opportunity in Swansea is the availability of affordable and accessible childcare. I am therefore very grateful that the Scrutiny Committee has suggested that it could be an avenue of inquiry.

Youth Support Services:

The Youth Support Services have come a very long way in the past year or so. The principles and vision for the service were quickly set out and agreed by the new administration and it was given firm political commitment from the beginning.

Reports are being finalised on the current provision both from the core service and from 3rd sector partners. From these reports there may be clear recommendations for changes to better our service, and any changes will be made with full consideration to our Young People and the UNCRC.

UNCRC:

As stated in the letter, members are aware that a report that seeks to embed the UNCRC in the Council Policy Framework has been written and will soon be presented to members.

It was initially envisaged that the report would need to go to Cabinet first, and as such I agreed that the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills and I would attend a present the paper to a pre-decision scrutiny meeting. It has come to light that as decisions around the policy framework are for Council only, the report will no longer be going to Cabinet first and therefore, from my understanding, pre-decision scrutiny would not be applicable. However, as suggested by the committee, I will gladly send a pre-briefing to members before Council

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Schools:


We also discussed the task of opening up schools to the local community and turning them into true community hubs. This is work that is being carried out by various Cabinet Members and my focus is specifically on play. As mentioned, we will be piloting a play rangers scheme in some of our schools which will open up the playgrounds for children after school. I will be sure to get the relevant information of which schools are being contacted back to scrutiny as soon as possible

My priorities and goals:

These are set around the delivery of the manifesto we were elected on and the policy commitment of the Council entitled 'Standing up for Swansea.' I have clear set goals within this which I work from.

Thank you again for inviting me to the committee. If there are further questions or I have missed something from my response then please feel free to contact me.

With the kindest regards,



Mitchell Theaker

**Cabinet Member for Opportunities for Children and Young People
Councillor for Cockett Ward**

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