

## Scrutiny Committee

I have lived in Llansamlet Ward for most of my life and I have shown an active interest in politics and community affairs. In 1986 I lived in Birchgrove and my wife's parents lived in Llansamlet and one of her brothers in Pantyblawd Road. My first point is about the West Glamorgan Agreement. I clearly remember community feelings on the proposed Gypsy/Traveller site and a meeting in the Parish Hall of St Samlet Church. County Councillor Wyndham Davies made it quite clear that if Llansamlet accepted a Gypsy/Traveller site, it wouldn't have another one. He argued that this was a political decision of the Labour controlled County Council.

Over twenty five years later a leaflet came through my door for the 2012 local elections. Three Labour Councillors who were standing for re-election stated clearly that there was a West Glamorgan Agreement from 1986. The councillors stated "Llansamlet Labour Councillors will be reminding the council of it's duty to honour the agreement made by West Glamorgan County Council in the 1980s that there would only be one travellers site in Llansamlet." This leaflet like all election leaflets would have been vetted by the Labour Party hierarchy. The Labour Party Councillors probably thought that they would be reminding the Liberal Democrat and Independent Administration. However Labour won control of the council and very quickly decided (with expensive legal opinion) that there was no agreement. Either the Labour Councillors misled the electorate or the Labour Party hierarchy have misrepresented the whole situation regarding this matter. This leads me to ask whether the electorate can believe the Labour Party in Swansea.

The Council paid for a London barrister's advice about the Agreement and Mr Arran, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer, also gave advice. Both (unsurprisingly) claimed there was no formal agreement. Yet in both documents there are references to a political or moral agreement. An example in council documents is Mr Burgess of WGCC talking about councillors' accepting a site "provided it is the only site to be established in their area." Again Mr Burgess "I would expect that it would be a condition of their proceeding with a site at this location, that it should be the only official site in Llansamlet." The WGCC Policy and Resources Committee 7/4/86 noted "that the provision of of a small Gypsy site, to accommodate not more than 12 caravans at Pantyblawd Road, Llansamlet would be supported locally provided it is the only site in the Llansamlet area." The full meeting of West Glamorgan County Council on 18/4/1986 resolved "(i) that subject to the amendment in (ii) below the Minutes of the following Committees on the date stated be received and adopted" Policy and Resources 7/4/1986 is listed. Then (ii) states Policy and Resources Committee 7/4/1986 paragraph 8, that the words in the last paragraph be amended to read "site in the Llansamlet Ward as it is now defined". This means that the Council adopted the proposal of its Policy and Resources Committee quoted above with the amended location. An almost exact statement was made by WGCC at a Public Local Inquiry on 27/1/1987, "their view was that a small site would not be opposed by the local residents providing it was the only one in their area"

Mr Arran and the barrister Mr Goudie have both claimed that legally there isn't an agreement. However legalistic views, which could be wrong, are not important here, the matter is a political and moral one. The

Labour controlled councils in 1986 agreed that there wouldn't be another site in Llansamlet. Just as importantly the public knew there was this agreement. The election leaflet mentioned above made local residents of a certain age remember back twenty five years and recall the 1986 Agreement. I and other petitioners found this out when we were knocking on doors and the electorate were angry about the Labour council's view that there was no agreement.

I wrote to the Leader of the Council (email), David Phillips on 8/3/2013 regarding the WGCC Agreement, the Labour election leaflet and the Council's position etc. I pointed out that Councillor Ryland Doyle had stated in a public meeting, that he had checked the leaflet with the Labour leadership, since he was election agent. Both David Phillips and June Burtonshaw have said there was no agreement, yet the election leaflet went out, after Councillor Doyle checked the leaflet with David Phillips. I also mentioned in the email to him that in the public meeting mentioned above Swansea East A.M. Mike Hedges stated that there was an agreement in the 1980s. The point is that either the Agreement existed or Labour set out to mislead the electorate in Llansamlet. Mr Phillips didn't reply to my email or a second one a week later. I can only assume he couldn't answer the points, so he choose to ignore it!! I also wrote to David Hagendyk on 8/4/2013 and 18/4/2013, with the same result, no reply!!!.

My second point is with regards to the Task and Finish Group. The minutes of 8/3/2012 made it clear that councillors wanted only three sites to be looked at, "It was considered appropriate by members that three sites go forward as being considered suitable." In the minutes of 10/4/2012, 19/7/2012 and 27/9/2012, there is no mention of Llansamlet being added. Officers may have different views to councillors, but councillors make decisions. It appears the term "member led Task and Finish Group" is inappropriate. When the administration changed after the 2012 election, it doesn't appear that the second Task and Finish Group were told that its predecessor had rejected two of the five sites. The Task and Finish Group on a site visit never got off the bus and they couldn't even see the Peniel Green site, due to its topography. The new Task and Finish Group never went on a site visit. Was this a robust process ?

I would like to know if the Task and Finish group or even the wider council considered a policy of dispersal, rather than concentration in one area. I believe that there is evidence from the old WGCC that dispersal is the best policy.

The question must be asked into whether the Task and Finish Group or the wider council tried to determine the relative weighting of Travellers' views and the views of local residents. It appears from various statements by some officers that the Travellers' views were seen as primary. Reena Owen in a Scrutiny meeting in March said that "they wanted to stay where they are", as if that was the end of the matter. Other people have stated that the Gypsy/Travellers won't go elsewhere. I believe the Traveller Liaison Officer has stated something rather similar. There doesn't seem to have been clarity with regards to this issue, indeed what weighting was given to the wider public's views, in terms of petitions against the site in Peniel Green and in the consultation process. We don't know the relative weighting on this matter and the process doesn't

seem robust. Indeed it appears that a new site might be developed and the problem of illegal sites continues. However I have an email from Martin Saville, Head of Public Protection dated 25/2/2013 regarding the temporary movement of Gypsy/Travellers to Millstream Way. In the email he discusses the temporary move but then goes on to say that "the site is only for the family that is residing at the temporary Park and Ride site, they will be required to move once a permanent site is developed elsewhere and this piece of land will be reverted back to scrubland." In other words wherever the new site is positioned, the Gypsy/Travellers who were on the illegal but tolerated site, will have to move there. Again a different view. Where is the clarity and robustness of the process?

My third area of concern is in relation to the site at Peniel Green. The site is a green field with animals grazing immediately behind my back garden and I would be opposed to £200,000 plus housing being proposed, as much as a proposed Gypsy/Traveller site. The site is far too big and will waste valuable council land. The site slopes downwards by over ten metres towards the north and eight metres east to west. The site retains so much water, there are mine workings, electricity pylons, a gas pipeline, a railway line and houses extremely close. There is no infrastructure whatsoever and no access road. An access road will cost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

When councillors finally visited the site in the Autumn, one councillor asked Mr Saville why is Llansamlet on the list? The councillor pointed out that they had visited the five sites and he couldn't believe

Llansamlet(Peniel Green) was on the list. He said-----

One out of five sites has no access road—Llansamlet.

One out of five sites slopes enormously—Llansamlet.

One out of five sites has no screening---Llansamlet.

One out of five has houses extremely close—Llansamlet.

One out of five has no infrastructure----Llansamlet.

Silence was the response.

The field has had one drift mine access filled in to the depth of forty metres, it only appeared in the last two years. The Coal Authority in Mansfield were responsible for filling the hole in and they told me that there is another one which might collapse.

The proposed site is part of the proposed Eastern Gateway to Swansea, which is obviously valuable and will play a key role in attracting business and commercial interests and therefore much needed jobs. In the Autumn of 2012 there was a consultation process with regards to the Swansea Vale Development Strategy . The Council's presentation described the land as a "Gateway Location." Council Officers stated in the documentation "the site is not suitable for a Gypsy/Traveller site and must be resisted"

Finally two other matters lead me to ask if the process has been fair and robust? Firstly there are serious doubts with relation to who was leading the whole process. In the cabinet meeting 1/11/2012 most members were unaware of the process and the identity of the sites. It appeared that the minutes of the Task and Finish

Group hadn't been seen and relevant information hadn't been taken on board. At the meeting Council Leader David Phillips misled the public in relation to who will make the decision. He said the full Council would and Mr Arran didn't correct him and state that the Cabinet would make the decision This isn't informed decision making and doesn't give you faith in the whole process. Perhaps someone here can tell me who was in charge of the whole process.

Secondly it appears that a lot of people in positions of power in the council wanted the site to be in Llansamlet. For a very long period of time the term Swansea Vale was being used to hide the reality of the site being immediately behind houses on the north side of Peniel Green Road. Indeed it was only in the autumn 2013 that the name Peniel Green surfaced. The council was using Swansea Vale to confuse the situation. Swansea Vale is a modern term to describe the lower Swansea Valley and was used in terms of the Enterprise Zone and some fairly new housing. Llansamlet residents would think that the proposed site would be near the River Tawe, perhaps in a similar position to the existing legal site. Is that we mean by a fair and robust process.

I would like to thank the meeting for letting me speak about my serious concerns.



Tom Jenkins,

269 Peniel Green Road,

Peniel Green,

Swansea.

SA79BJ

17/5/2014



thomas jenkins <tom.jenkins@ntlworld.com>

## Llansamlet Labour Party Leaflet and the Gypsy ?traveller Site

2 messages

thomas jenkins <tom.jenkins@ntlworld.com>

8 March 2013 14:21

To: david.phillips@swansea.gov.uk

Dear Mr Phillips

I have been advised by Mr Saville to write to you before I take the issue further. It is with regards to an official Labour Party leaflet for the May elections last year, which was delivered to homes in the Llansamlet ward. Three councillors, Dennis James, Ryland Doyle and Penny Matilews told the electorate "Llansamlet Labour Councillors will be reminding the council of it's(sic) duty to honour the agreement made by West Glamorgan County Council in the 1980s that there would only be one travellers (sic) site in Llansamlet" This statement obviously contributed to Labour winning all four of the seats. Since May there have been statements by a number of leading Labour Politicians denying the agreement. Also the City and County of Swansea has two reports on their website denying the "legality of the agreement", though both seem to accept that some sort of policy regarding this matter was agreed by officers and I believe elected members in the 1980s. (I am more than happy to use alternative words to West Glamorgan Agreement, such as policy, outcome, decision etc) The Llansamlet elected members would have included County Councillor Wyndham Davies and District Councillors Dennis James, Eileen Chilcott and Lawrence Bailey. I believe that there was also input from Morriston Councillors because of the site being so close to the Morriston Ward. If there was a policy (agreement) then this should be faced up to politically and morally by the Labour controlled council. If there wasn't an agreement then three Labour councillors misled the Llansamlet electorate and this may have largely contributed to four Labour councillors getting elected. It may also have had an impact in neighbouring wards. In Bonymash, which looked like returning well known independent Councillors, Labour won two seats. Only a few miles away in St Thomas and Landore, Independents and Liberal Democrats lost due to huge swings to Labour.

Only nine days ago a public meeting was held against a second gypsy/traveller site in Llansamlet. At that meeting Councillor Ryland Doyle claimed that in 2012, he checked with the local Labour leadership that the leaflet could go out to the electorate. This was because he was responsible for the leaflet as he was the agent. It is also obvious to anyone involved in local politics that the Labour Party leadership, including yourself, would have given permission for the leaflet to go out to the electorate. Almost certainly the Welsh Labour Party bureaucracy in Cardiff was consulted, with David Hadendyk giving permission. At the same meeting, which you were invited to attend, Mike Hedges the Labour A.M. for Swansea East, stated that there was an agreement in the 1980s, that there shouldn't be another gypsy/traveller site in Llansamlet. He also clearly stated that in 2013 there shouldn't be another site in Llansamlet or indeed Morriston. Either the agreement existed or the Labour Party's campaign in the local elections of 2012 set out to mislead the electorate, particularly in Llansamlet, but it may have had a much wider significance throughout Swansea. If I do not have a satisfactory explanation from you, then I will be forced to use other avenues in order to achieve a satisfactory conclusion to this whole matter.

Tom Jenkins,  
269 Peniel Green Road,  
Swansea,  
SA79BJ

thomas jenkins <tom.jenkins@ntlworld.com>

26 March 2013 08:51



thomas jenkins &lt;tom.jenkins@ntlworld.com&gt;

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**Gypsy/Traveller Sites**

5 messages

**Saville, Martin** <Martin.Saville@swansea.gov.uk>

25 February 2013 19:11

To: tom.jenkins@ntlworld.com

Cc: "Straw, Jack (Chief Executive)" &lt;Jack.Straw@swansea.gov.uk&gt;, "Saville, Martin" &lt;Martin.Saville@swansea.gov.uk&gt;, "Arran, Patrick" &lt;Patrick.Arran@swansea.gov.uk&gt;, "Owen, Reena" &lt;Reena.Owen@swansea.gov.uk&gt;, "Phillips, David (Leader)" &lt;david.phillips@swansea.gov.uk&gt;

Dear Mr Jenkins, further to your e-mail of the 20<sup>th</sup> February and my acknowledgment, I have now had the opportunity to draft this response to you.

In respect of the Task and finish Group minutes of the meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012, members' views were that they preferred three sites as opposed to five but there were no valid grounds for excluding the other two at that stage and they were advised accordingly. This was made perfectly clear to the members in the meeting and subsequently members visited all five sites.

You are quite right that the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Forum is formally provided for in the council's constitution but has not met since the meeting you refer to in 2010. The work of the Task and Finish Group did run side by side with the forum and having not been involved in the dealing with Gypsy and Travellers at that time, I can only presume that the search for a site took priority. Of the eight members on the forum, five of them formed the task and finish group so were well aware of the aims of the forum. I understand that a meeting of this forum will be held in the near future after the consultation period in the search for a new site has finished.

In terms of the movement of the Gypsy Traveller family from their temporary position on the Park and Ride site, the Council really has no option but to move them to facilitate the Swansea Vale Flood Defence Scheme. The costs of repositioning the family has to be found from within the Council's existing budget. We do not know the precise costs of the move until all the facility providers have completed their work and we see just how much work has to be done to complete the access track. An estimate of about £80,000 was indicated when the feasibility of a move was considered but this does pale into insignificance against the £7,000,000 European Convergence money being spent on the flood defence works which will safeguard parts of Morryston and Llansamlet.

The site is only for the family that is residing at the temporary park and ride site, they will be required to move once a permanent site is developed elsewhere and this piece of land will be reverted back to scrubland.

Regards

Martin Saville

Head of Public Protection

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**From:** thomas jenkins [mailto:tom.jenkins@ntlworld.com]