

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS
PART A - SUPPLEMENTARIES

1. **Councillors JW Jones, CA Holley & J Newbury**
In response to a question on the District Regeneration Area Grant (Council 15th April) it stated that applications were invited by established local business networks and originated from Businesses and Entrepreneurs who were mainly already receiving business advice from Welsh Government's "Business Wales" support providers. Will the Cabinet Member tell us why this selection method was used and give a breakdown of successful businesses who received this grant.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration

This was small scale funding and could therefore only assist a limited number of existing businesses and new business starts. Applicants were required to submit an application form and business proposal in support of their request. Assistance in developing the supporting documentation can be obtained free of charge from one or more of Welsh Government's "Business Wales." providers. Not all applicants required this assistance and some came direct to officers administering the scheme. For the majority of new businesses however the help of Business Wales saves a great deal of time and as they have already demonstrated their commitment to starting a business by becoming clients of Business Wales, this particular conduit to the business community is considered to be valid.

Forty one applications for start-up finance were originally approved although in the final analysis only thirty two of the successful applicants claimed their grant of up to £500. The other nine deciding either not to start their business at this time or not make the required purchases and claim their grant. The total amount awarded to new business was £15,544.45

Applications were also accepted from existing businesses and seventeen applications for grant assistance of between £1000 - £5000 were approved. Sixteen of the successful applicants claimed their grant with the final amount awarded and claimed in this category being £35,444.82.

The total amount awarded being £50,989.27 among 48 new and existing businesses.

A list of those businesses supported is below:

No	Business Name	Grant Claimed
1	AGM Electrical Contractors	500.00
2	Ant's Console and PC services	500.00
3	Fforestfach Vehicle Repairs	500.00
4	Kick StartPT	379.00

5	Coden Solutions Ltd	500.00
6	Walford-Richards Designs	500.00
7	St James Restoration	500.00
8	CL James Accountants	500.00
9	Eliminator Pest Control	500.00
10	Clever Paws Ltd	500.00
11	Creative Curriculum	500.00
12	Mail Boxes etc	500.00
13	Confidimus	500.00
14	XD Studios	478.78
15	Locksmiths	500.00
16	Photography	500.00
17	Rowanvale Books	500.00
18	Mimosa Services	500.00
19	Churchill Associates	500.00
20	Elements Sports Therapy	500.00
21	Elbow Grease Cleaning	500.00
22	Swansea Artisan Cakes	500.00
23	Compass Book Keeping & Accountancy	500.00
24	Little Dragon Designs	500.00
25	Malabar Aaanaa	500.00
26	Mayfly	500.00
27	Dynaset	500.00

28	PR Food Specialists Ltd	500.00
29	Café Del Mar	500.00
30	Right Recruit Ltd	500.00
31	Andy's Motorcycle Services	500.00
32	GreenTech Heating	500.00
Existing Businesses		
1	Wolfestone Translation	£5,000.00
2	Work Wales recruitment	£4,130.00
3	Welsh Green Business Centre	£3,710.00
4	Cedi Cottages	£955.00
5	Olives & Oils	£1,606.00
6	SA Flyers	£2,228.96
7	G & T Transport	£1,809.52
8	Stardust Boutique	£2,460.69
9	Mark Jermin Mgt	£940.00
10	Stephen Kent &Co	£1,498.03
11	Bowstones Holiday Lets	£1,612.50
12	Cater Clean Supplies	£3,247.02
13	Envirascape Ltd	£2,222.50
14	Excell Ltd	£2,427.50
15	Bako Wales	£1,039.00
16	Bionema Ltd	£1,000.00

2. **Councillors CA Holley, MH Jones & JW Jones**
 Will the Leader/Cabinet Member tell Council how much money has been spent in Target Areas in the financial year 2013/2014.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Target Areas.

As Councillors will know the Council does not budget for Council Services on an area basis nor does it record actual expenditure on that basis.

To that extent it would not be possible to detail expenditure on core and routine services on a target area basis.

Notwithstanding this, the following is an indication of specific expenditure incurred within target areas over and above normal service provision but or as a consequence of, not necessarily directly related to Council's Target Area Policy :-

Service area	Expenditure description	Value (£)
Children and Young People	Cluster training and awareness event – UNHRC – 100 staff from 8 schools attended and all 8 schools have registered with UNICEF, all have had further training, 6 have an action plan to achieve level 1 status and 1 has achieved that status.	2,000
Youth Services	Townhill Youth Support Centre – upgrade to furniture, set up of IT suite, Technocamps summer programme	14,000
	Blaenymaes Youth Support Centre. Upgrade to furniture and Technocamps summer programme	10,500
ICT/Education	LIFE programme expenditure including Purchase/lease of hardware and Specialist teaching support	80,467
	ICT infrastructure investment in target area schools	180,000
Housing	HRA Capital programme – work in respect of achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2013/14	8,691,000

Nature conservation team	Environmental works around the Pantycelyn Road Hillside Wildlife corridor	13,000
Leisure Services	New/upgraded play facilities	250,000
	Mobile Play Equipment	165,000
	New skatepark equipment	30,000
	Brynmelin park	20,000
Economic Regeneration	136 participants on Workways programme 2013/14	362,000
	Beyond Bricks and Mortar – target area placements	25,000
Highways	Road resurfacing	220,000
	Footway works	238,000
	Traffic Management	52,000
	Speed limit introduction	25,000
Tackling poverty small grants programme	North West Cluster/Penderry	16,921
	West Cluster/Townhill	12,727
	Capital Grant – Topic House	12,000
	Revenue costs – Topic House	7,500

In addition there has been a range of other additional and targeted works and activities including:

Safe Routes to Schools in Townhill

Wi Fi access points installed to 6 Community Centres

Additional Parenting Programmes

Team Around the family co-ordinator post

Restorative Practice work

Additional benefits and poverty training courses to staff working in Target Areas

Bringing allotments back into use

3. **Councillors AM Day, JW Jones, MH Jones, PM Meara & J Newbury**
We note with interest that many areas of City Parks and rural grass verges have not been mowed as frequently as in previous years. We understand this is due to the adoption locally of the Wales Action Plan for Pollinators. While the intention is supported by us all, could the relevant Cabinet member(s) tell Council.
1. As this is a change of Council Policy, where was the decision taken to implement the Plan locally.
 2. What specific areas of City Parks and grass verges will therefore not be mowed, what criteria were applied to the selection of these areas and who took the decision about which areas were selected.
 3. What risk assessments were undertaken in the decision making especially for those suffering from Hayfever.
 4. Whether the decisions were entirely based on environmental considerations?
 5. In the light of the considerable number of enquiries local Councillors have had, what efforts have been made to inform the public of the introduction of

these measures and the reasons for their introduction.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Place

This is not a change to Council Policy but is an imaginative proposal which aims to promote wildlife bio-diversity in an urban landscape whilst at the same time supporting the budget reductions required of the Council during this period of significant change.

Sections of more than 30 parks around the City are being left un-mown as part of a scheme which it's hoped will encourage more wildlife and insects to return as well as create havens for bees and other pollinators.

The move comes in response to a Welsh Government call to promote biodiversity and in the wake of Swansea Council's hugely-successful wild flower initiative launched last year which attracted hundreds of positive comments from residents and visitors alike.

It's also a creative way to help manage the Council's parks budget which has seen a reduction in the amount of money available for grass cutting.

Parks which have seen sections given over to meadow include Singleton Park, Morryston Park, Ravenhill Park and Garden Village Recreation Ground.

This is a pilot project to create meadowland in an urban environment. There are clear benefits for local flora and fauna but we are very keen to know what residents think so we look at how we can amend and improve the programme in the future.

The wild flowers initiative last year was a terrific success and apart from creating a blaze of colour in unexpected places we're also expecting it to help promote bio-diversity as well.

The Council looks after more than 130 parks and open spaces in the City and none of the 32 areas chosen will be given over entirely to meadowland. It does mean that grass in the chosen sections will not be close-mown during the growing season to create habitats for pollinators and other insect life. Uncut areas will be monitored throughout the year with comments and feedback from local residents being recorded and used in the decision-making process for the scheme in future years. The meadowland will be cut during the winter months which will help native wild flowers and grasses to develop.

Swansea is gaining a reputation for its commitment to sustainability, the environment and biodiversity. Other councils across the UK have been doing similar things in their parks and open spaces and there are other economic benefits arising from this initiative, for example pollinating insects like bees and butterflies contribute millions of pounds annually to the crop market.

The Welsh Government's Wales Action Plan for Pollinators launched last year called on local councils to do their bit to promote biodiversity in towns, cities and developed areas by reviewing how we manage roadside verges, parks and public green space.

No park will be given over entirely to meadow because it's important that there is also space for local communities for play and other activities, but this is a bold and imaginative move that will support the environment and biodiversity and, ultimately, help grow the food we eat.

A similar project is being undertaken on Rural and Urban verges across the City.

A full list of parks and open spaces across Swansea taking part in the biodiversity initiative are included below:

Gors Playing Fields; Singleton Park; West Cross Woodlands; Ravenhill Park; Graig Y Coed Playing Fields; Caer Gynydd amenity area; Stepney Street outdoor site; Manselton Quarry; Cwm Level Playing Fields; Normandy Road amenity area; Rear of Wychtree Street; White Rock outdoor site; Wychtree Riverside amenity area; Maesteg Park; Broadway Field; Plasmarl outdoor site; Blaen y Maes Playing Fields; Jeffreys Court outdoor site; Mynydd Newydd Playing Fields; Golden Grove Park; Valeo outdoor site; Parc y Werin; Loughor Castle; Garden Village Recreation Ground; Woodland Terrace outdoor site, Gowerton; Glyncollen House; Trallwn Playing Fields; Tircanol Playing Fields; Martins Field; Tower Playground; Morryston Park.

There have been a number of press releases on this initiative and the intention is to continue with providing information to the media on the project and to encourage comments from all parties to support our plans for the future of the scheme.

4. **Councillors PM Meara, AM Day & TH Rees**

Why is "More Poetry Needed" and how much did the mural cost.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration

"More Poetry Is Needed" is an 'Art Across The City' artwork by Turner Prize winning artist Jeremy Deller that has been commissioned by Locws International for the Dylan Thomas 100 Festival. Jeremy Deller is an award-winning artist who represented Great Britain at the prestigious Venice Biennale in 2013 and ranks as one of the most exciting artists of his generation. Deller was invited to make an artistic response to Thomas' life and work and he presented the idea of a bold statement in support of poetry. "More Poetry Is Needed" is the largest permanent artwork by Deller globally and has helped raise the profile of Swansea as a cultural destination. It has proved very popular with the general public and in particular young people, many of whom have used the artwork as inspiration for their own artistic endeavours through the Locws International 'Education and Outreach Programme'. The artwork has also inspired many local people to write their own lines of poetry for the "Tawe Mega Poem", an online poem initiated by Locws International that allows anybody to contribute their own lines. The poem currently stands at over 1,400 lines. "More Poetry Is Needed" has been paid for exclusively by a Dylan Thomas 100 grant from the Welsh Government administered by the Arts Council of Wales. The mural cost £7,200 which covered artist fees, cost of scaffolding, labour and materials.

PART B –

1. **Councillors AM Day, MH Jones & CA Holley**
The latest statistics published by the Welsh Assembly (<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2014/140430-young-people-not-education-employment-training-year-31-december-2013-en.pdf>) show that the percentage of NEETs in Swansea for each of the 3 last years (2011, 2012 and 2013) have been 3.1%, 3.2% and 3.9% Can the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills explain this disappointing trend, especially as the figures for Wales over the last three years have reduced from 4.4% to 3.7% meaning that Swansea is now worse than the Welsh average.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills

Swansea has witnessed a year on year reduction in NEETs and Unknowns combined since 2005 until 2011. In 2011 the 'makeup' of the NEET group was analysed and the targets reviewed.

As a result it was recognised that due to the nature of the core NEET group, the barriers they are faced with and the current mix of post 16 provision on offer, the challenge is to sustain the approx. 3% achieved in 2011 whilst longer term solutions were developed i.e. Swansea Guarantee. The Swansea Guarantee is our commitment to giving all young people an offer of further education or training after completing year 11.

The NEET figures published by Welsh Government are the result of the Careers Wales, Year 11 Leaver Destination Survey snapshot taken annually on 31st October. In 2013, the snapshot was taken on or around the 17th November by which time the Swansea data included young people who had dropped out of college. On 31st October the NEET figure was 3.2% compared to 3.9% on 17th November.

The published NEET figures across other local authorities do not include young people whose status is 'unknown' – Swansea has been successful in ascertaining the whereabouts of 100% of the cohort since 2009, as a result its NEET data is more accurate. When the 'unknowns' are taken into account – Swansea remains at 3.9% in 2013, below the All Wales average of 4.5%.

The exchange of learner 'drop out' data by Gower College Swansea and Careers Wales happens on a bi-weekly basis to ensure young people are followed up and offered the support they need to re-engage in Education, Employment or Training. This is a local arrangement that has been highlighted as good practice by Welsh Government. Until this type of data exchange is common practice across Wales the Swansea NEET figure is not comparable to other Local Authority areas. However, the Swansea NEET figure is comparable to previous years on a local level.

2.

Councillors AM Day, PM Black & PM Meara

Can the relevant Cabinet Member give Council the following information relating to the allocation of Disabled Parking Permits (Blue Badges) –

- a. the number of new applications for Permits for each of the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013;
- b. the number of new applications approved and the number rejected in each of those years;
- c. the number of applications for renewals for Permits for each of the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013;
- d. the number of applications for renewals approved and the number rejected in each of those years;
- e. the number of applications due for renewal in each of the years 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources

Please note we cannot differentiate between new Blue Badge applications and applications from persons who have had a badge previously.

Year	No of Blue Badge Applications	No of Blue Badges Issued	No of Blue Badges Refusals	No of Badges due to Expire
2010	6809	6487	322	
2011	6733	6331	402	
2012	6329	5758	571	
2013	6243	5564	679	
2014				6686
2015				5440
2016				5240

There is no automatic right if renewal in respect if blue badge applications which are issued for a maximum period of three years.

Blue badge applications are considered alongside detailed guidance issued by the Welsh Government. A number of our decisions have been reviewed by Welsh Government Officials and on 10 December 2013 they visited this Council to confirm that the Blue Badge service was being administered correctly in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. They validated the decisions made on all cases they reviewed.

3.

Councillors AM Day, PM Black, MH Jones & PM Meara

What measures are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the Budget allocation for the Dylan Thomas Centenary Celebrations.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration

The Dylan Thomas 2014 centenary celebrations has adopted a collaborative approach which ensures that the City & County of Swansea and its partners at local, regional and national level maximise the opportunities that present themselves throughout the year. The product and promotion of and for the year will also further strengthen Swansea's status as Wales' City of Culture.

Dylan Thomas related events and activities have been organised at various Council cultural venues as well as other key arts venues in Swansea and South West Wales. This has, also created a significant level of interest both online and locally, nationally be evidenced now that the celebrations are well underway.

The Swansea/Abertawe Dylan Thomas 2014 Event Plan includes a set of objectives and targets which are monitored on a regular basis. The locally supported projects will also have a set of monitoring and evaluation data that is a requirement of the funding provided.

The type of specific actions that are monitored to ensure that the campaign is effective include

- An increase of visitors to the Dylan Thomas Exhibition
- Increase in ticket sales to events at venues throughout the City
- Increased number of unique web visits
- An evaluation of the increased visitor numbers of visitors to the city during the Centenary year and the economic impact of these visits.

This information will be collated by the Council Officer co-ordinating the DT2014 and presented as part of the output report post 31st December 2014.

Some of the successes so far include the highly visible street branding at key strategic locations, branding on Council livery, the development of Dylanthomas.com and a varied and ever growing events programme at the Dylan Thomas Centre and other venues in the City. The fact that the Council was able to host the inaugural UK and worldwide Notebooks exhibition (on temporary loan from Buffalo University) at the Dylan Thomas centre has been one of the highlights of the programme so far. The Council was also successful in securing Heritage Lottery Funding (total project cost of £1.2m) which will include a new exhibition permanent exhibition at the Dylan Thomas Centre along with a Learning and Engagement programme. This will be re-launched at the end of October to coincide with the centenary of the poet's birthday.