



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

**To/
Councillor David Phillips,
Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty**

BY EMAIL

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SPC/2014-15/1

*Your Ref
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*Date
Dyddiad:*

11 June 2014

Dear Councillor Phillips,

Re: Cabinet Member Question Session – 14 April

Thank you for your attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 14 April 2014 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty. As stated we are writing to you in order to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, and share the views of the committee. Apologies for the delay in getting this to you.

You talked about 'Poverty and Prevention' as an overarching strand that should cut across all of the council's work, and that the purpose of your portfolio was to develop the poverty and prevention strategy. The committee was interested to see the clear thread through all council policies.

You described specific issues that this work included such as, ensuring children have the best start in life, school readiness, initiatives including Team Around the Family, developing parenting skills, tackling the impact of welfare reforms, and how your work linked with the target areas approach and engaging the community in local based solutions.

However, you stressed that this was a particularly difficult and challenging agenda, one that was not easy to define, and depended a lot on the work of partners as well as the council. It was concerning that the scale of the problem appeared to be increasing (e.g. no. of children living in workless households). But, you gave assurance to the committee that you were working on identifying specific actions and measures of success to evaluate progress and the effectiveness of efforts and resources being put in, both in the short, medium and long-term.

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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The committee appreciated your portfolio objectives and acknowledged the size of the task, but highlighted the importance of having baseline performance information and clear targets and milestones about what you want to achieve and outcomes. It was important to the committee that you could demonstrate the link between activity and improvement / outcomes. We heard that you have commissioned work on developing a robust performance framework for this work. We noted that you welcomed a view from scrutiny on effective measures across the Local Service Board. You informed us that performance information in relation to the poverty and prevention agenda would be available around August. We look forward to seeing this at the earliest opportunity. It is not disputed that this is a long-term agenda but it has to be measured, and in the early years we should expect to see positive indications of progress.

A number of specific issues were discussed, which are summarised below:

Partnership Working

We recognised how vital effective partnership working was to success and wanted to know how you were ensuring that this was happening. You indicated that partnership working was easier said than done, but as chair of the Local Service Board you were engaged in dialogue with partners on a regular basis to work on shared objectives. However you felt that more could be done at a national level to facilitate working across organisational boundaries. We expect that the Local Service Board Scrutiny Performance Panel will keep a watch on partnership working.

Target Areas

We were interested in your comments that the target areas may be too big. You confirmed that more information was being sought to inform any change in approach to ensure that resources are directed in the right places and have the greatest impact. We agreed that it would be sensible to keep target areas work under review. We will be meeting with Councillor Ryland Doyle in October so will take the opportunity to pick up any specific issues with him.

Poverty Forum

We would be grateful for some information about the work of the Poverty Forum. Can you confirm who is involved in this group and whether it has met?


Flying Start

Can you provide further information on the effectiveness of the Flying Start partnership in Swansea, including financial commitments? We gather that some work has been done to evaluate Flying Start and would appreciate you sharing any relevant reports on this.

We would be grateful for your response to this letter. It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 11 July so that it can be included in the agenda of a future committee meeting at the earliest opportunity.

We look forward to meeting you again to follow up on portfolio developments. Thank you for providing a copy of presentation given by the Director – People, and Head of Poverty & Prevention, which covers the principles and approach to anti-poverty work, the targeting of resources, and partnership working. This could serve as a useful point of reference when we ask you about activities and achievements, and consider progress with your anti-poverty agenda in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

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

COUNCILLOR MIKE DAY

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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