



**CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA**  
**DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE**

**To/  
Councillor Mark Child,  
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing**

**BY EMAIL**

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**SPC/2014-15/4**

*Your Ref  
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*Date  
Dyddiad:*

**10 September 2014**

Dear Councillor Child,

**Re: Cabinet Member Question Session – 4 August**

Thank you for your attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 4 August 2014 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Wellbeing. Thank you also for the short written report on headlines from your work which you had submitted ahead of the meeting to provide a focus for the session.

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. The specific issues discussed are summarised below:

**Transforming Adult Social Services**

You stated that the transformation of adult social services was a difficult area but progressing. You felt that this was the most important issue facing this and other councils, with pressure to change models of service delivery. The council's TASS programme was about the changes that are required in Swansea.

We asked about progress and key milestones. We noted the emphasis in prevention and wellbeing through Community Connectors and other means to prevent people needing intervention from Social Services at all, and build up community resilience. You also talked about achievements in relation to re-ablement and Telecare. You stated that the independent review of Older People's Services was due to report in September and will provide advice and opinion on current provision and how to meet future needs.

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You assured the committee that community connectors were making a difference. However, we asked for figures to show the impact of community connectors and progress across the different areas of Swansea, which you agreed to provide. We also highlighted the need to map social care provision (not just council services) across the area.

### **Western Bay Health & Social Care Programme**

We were concerned that there was still little clarity about the governance arrangements for the regional Western Bay Programme, political accountability, and its interface with scrutiny. You agreed that greater scrutiny of Western Bay was necessary, and encouraged dialogue with the other authorities concerned in establishing appropriate arrangements.

You reminded the committee of the all councillor event on 13 August with the Western Bay Programme Director which will help us to understand why it has been established, who is involved and what it is aiming to achieve. We agreed to await this meeting before considering the way forward in relation to the development of scrutiny of the Western Bay.

### **Wellbeing in Target Areas**

Whilst we are concerned about wellbeing across the whole of the City & County of Swansea an issue was raised about the impact of the target area approach and understanding what is happening in those areas in relation to Flying Start, safeguarding, numbers of looked after children etc. It would be helpful to get a feel of how targeting is working. You agreed that analysis of this issue, and having the right statistics, would be extremely valuable and you undertook to provide us with further information on this.

### **Case Conferences**

We asked about the time taken to organise social services case conferences with partners. An issue was raised about the number of agencies involved in case conferences and often delays in dealing with cases can be blamed on social services when often it depends on the input / information of other agencies. You agreed this can be frustrating but there was dependency on others, although you stated that pressure is put on partners to avoid delays and consequences this may have for families awaiting decisions.

### **Results Based Accountability in Social Services**

We recalled much discussion about Results Based Accountability over the last few years and asked about its use and impact in Social Services. You stated that there has been talk of standardised outcome measures and 'all Wales' parameters within the new Bill and guidance was awaited from the Welsh Government that will help to develop such a performance framework.

## **Changes to Wellbeing Scrutiny Performance Panel**

You felt that although there has been a reduction in Looked After Children numbers and other improvements there needs to be a continued raised profile and welcomed the committee's decision to re-establish a separate Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel.

You also welcomed the creation of new Panel to focus on the Transforming Adult Social Services (TASS) agenda, looking at the change process and providing critical friend challenge to the proposed or anticipated improvements. It will be important for the Panel to consider the outcome of the independent review into older people's services and how it will be used to progress the transformation of services, and inform budget discussions.

## **Adaptations**

We noted that the waiting times for a Disabled Facilities Grant fell during 2013/14 however the average time taken (263 days) was still a matter of concern. It was unclear exactly how the start and end dates were calculated e.g. did this include waiting times for initial assessment to be carried out. It was difficult for the committee to understand exactly why the process took so long.

## **Affordable Housing**

You acknowledged that the authority was far short of delivering the required level of affordable housing in Swansea. It was acknowledged that performance was influenced by the total housing build in Swansea, which has not been high enough.

There was some concern about whether policies were being applied assertively and our strength to negotiate, particularly when considering planning applications, with regard to affordable housing. We asked what you could do to ensure the authority is more assertive with developers.

Following a question you clarified that it was not easy for the council to just build its own affordable homes. Unfortunately with the funding involved and opportunities available to RSLs it would cost the council twice as much as others.

You stated that work was continuing to explore new models to achieve targets, and we were particularly interested in the different approaches that you were looking at for providing affordable homes.

Please note that the work that scrutiny carried out on affordable housing last year is due to be revisited soon. The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel will be reconvened to follow up on the implementation of its recommendations and the impact of its work.

We would be grateful for your response to this letter. It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 10 October 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 and hearing about achievements and impact.

Yours sincerely,

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

**COUNCILLOR MIKE DAY**

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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