



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

Councillor Mary Jones  
Convenor, Service Improvement and  
Finance Performance Panel  
City & County of Swansea

**BY EMAIL**

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RS//SH

9 February 2015

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e.g. Braille, audio tape or a different language, please contact me**

Dear Councillor Jones

**Cabinet Member Question Session – 24 November**

Thank you for your letter dated the 21 of January 2015, outlining your reflections and further questions following our discussion at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on the 24 November 2014.

**Budget**

You asked about the type of support that was available to potential community groups wanting to take on services.

The scale of the financial, demographic and sustainability challenges facing the Council requires a radical new approach to the provision of local services. Current models of service delivery are unsustainable and do not always provide the best outcomes for people. The transformation of services is vital to meet the challenges of the future and this is made more urgent by the significant budget cuts we are facing. We also need a new relationship between residents and public services, which supports people and communities to help themselves and to run more local services.

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**ROB STEWART**  
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In order to support this new relationship between residents and public services, we have embedded community action into our new Corporate Plan 2015/17, our Sustainable Swansea-Fit for the Future programme and our Tackling Poverty Strategy by;

- identifying 'Building Sustainable Communities' as a key priority within the Corporate Plan 2015/17,
- developing a discrete 'Community Action' work stream within Sustainable Swansea-Fit for the Future programme,
- supporting the 'Empowerment of Local People' through the development of a Community Action Learning programme in the Tackling Poverty strategy and action plan.

In addition, to embedding community action in our local plans and strategies, we also provide a number of practical measures to support community groups wanting to take on services. For example, we have commissioned Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS) to provide specialist information and advice to community groups and employ a Third Sector grants co-ordinator to oversee and administer funding to a range of external organisations. We are currently in the process of developing a toolkit to provide information to new start ups and sign post to further sources of advice and support. We have also established a Community Action Transformation fund which aims to build community capacity and facilitate the transfer of community assets-buildings. The fund can be used by community groups to undertake feasibility studies, develop business plans, community engagement, training for local people to run or manage a facility, initial set up costs and capacity building.

You also asked about we were planning to deal with short term funding challenges with long term sustainability.

Sustainable Swansea - Fit for the Future is the Council's long term strategy for transforming services and meeting current and future budget deficits. From our experience of dealing with significant budget reductions, the timing of savings is crucial, in terms of balancing short term funding challenges and long term sustainability.

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It is imperative that where potential service savings are found, they are implemented as soon as possible, and if there are difficulties with implementation, alternative proposals are put forward, which includes bringing forward longer term proposals.

**City Region/City Centre**

You stated in your letter that the recent establishment of a Development Advisory Group, has been charged with helping transform Swansea city centre into a thriving hub of commerce, culture and leisure. You said that the committee was particularly interested in plans for business support and job creation.

In relation to the Council's plans for business support and job creation, we will be using the regeneration process to maximise the economic impact. This will include a number of activities:

- stimulating knowledge economy jobs within a new central business district at the Kingsway, by working with organisations like Trinity St David's and Tech Hub to create employment space for new starts and existing businesses;
- retail and leisure jobs created by new investment from occupiers within the new developments;
- The Council's Beyond Bricks & Mortar initiative will help match labour and skills to opportunities via its-targeted recruitment and training work;
- Supply chain opportunities will be explored so that local firms are able to compete for contracts in connection with the regeneration programme.

I am grateful for the work of the inward investment scrutiny panel. The panel's report has been considered by the Cabinet Member and an action plan has been produced and reported to Cabinet. I am confident that progress will be made in line with the agreed action plan during the months ahead.

**Swansea Palace Theatre**

You stated in your letter that there has been concern raised about the poor state of repair and condition of the Palace Theatre and a call for the Council to use its powers to protect the building from further decay and to ensure its future survival.

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I am pleased to update that the works to safeguard the Palace Theatre have now commenced. The council's contribution to the cost of these works will be released upon satisfactory completion of the works in due course.

**Civic Centre Sale/ Central Library**

You stated in your letter that a member of the Public was concerned about the sale of Civic Centre and plans for the Central Library if the building is sold.

If the Civic Centre is sold, a city centre location for the Central Library would be found, if required. This remains our preferred option as it supports a key objective in our approach to regenerating the city centre by increasing the footfall and the number of people who live, work and visit and the city centre.

**Areas for Scrutiny**

I welcome the constructive comments and role that the Scrutiny Programme continue to play in terms of reviewing our proposals, in order to ensure we can deliver the very best services for the people of Swansea,.

I look forward to meeting you again in order discuss progress.

Yours sincerely,

**COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART**  
**LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND STRATEGY**

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