



## City And County Of Swansea

### Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Robert Francis-Davies  
Cabinet Member for Enterprise,  
Development and Regeneration

**cc.** Councillor Paul Lloyd  
Chair of Planning Committee

**BY EMAIL**

*Please ask for:  
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:  
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail  
e-Bost:*

*Our Ref  
Ein Cyf:*

*Your Ref  
Eich Cyf:*

*Date  
Dyddiad:*

**Scrutiny**

**01792 636292**

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

26<sup>th</sup> March 2015

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Planning Scrutiny Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Regeneration following a meeting of the Group on the 19 March 2015. It is about enforcement, legal support, major developments, householder advice and building control. It includes conclusions and proposals.

### **Planning Scrutiny Working Group – 19 March 2015**

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

This letter is to update you about the recent Planning Scrutiny Working Group. I understand that illness prevented you from attending. We did receive a report from Phil Holmes, Head of Service and Ryan Thomas, Development, Conservation and Design Manager and I would like to thank those officers for their contribution.

#### **Enforcement Activity**

You will recall that the primary reason for setting up the working group was a concern over the backlog of enforcement case which stood at 670 in November 2013. We are pleased to hear that the service has made significant progress on this issue and that the backlog has now been reduced to below 500 and that officers expect the figure to be 350-400 by the end of the next financial year. We agree that this would be a reasonable level for the backlog. We are also pleased to hear that the number of cases being dealt with now exceeds the number of new cases and this gives us reassurance that the backlog will continue to fall. We note that this improvement has been achieved at the same time as significant savings are being found. Credit must go to the service for this.

Scrutiny / Craffu

**City and County of Swansea / Dinas a Sir Abertawe**  
**Guildhall, Swansea, SA1 4PE / Neuadd y Ddinas, Abertawe, SA1 4PE**  
[www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutiny)

Given this improvement it is no longer necessary for this working group to continue to meet. We feel that the situation should nevertheless be monitored going forward and we suggest that this is done through a regular report to the Planning Committee. We expect also to see an improvement in the rate of enforcement cases resolved in 12 weeks by the Authority. We suggest that the national league table for this measure is also reported to the Planning Committee when available. I am copying Councillor Paul Lloyd, the Chair of Planning into this letter so that he is aware of these proposals.

### **Legal Support**

We were concerned that delays in the legal department may have been causing delays in the enforcement process. We were advised that numbers in the legal department, who had been dealing with these issues, were seen as adequate. We will, however, be seeking further assurance that these numbers be maintained in the medium term to alleviate a log jam. We would ask you to keep an eye on this issue and ensure that the current arrangements continue to work well.

On a related issue we felt that councillors should be informed about legal actions related to planning that are taking place in their wards. We would be grateful if you could look into this.

### **Publicity for Planning Enforcement**

The Panel were unanimous that there should be positive publicity when the Council has been successful in its enforcement action. This would send a clear message to those thinking of bypassing planning laws and reassure the public that the Council is working to protect the environment as it should. We appreciate that any publicity needs to be handled carefully but would ask that you explore this issue and see how it might be improved.

### **Major Developments Sponsored by National Government**

We feel strongly that the Council should not be unfairly disadvantaged for the support that it gives to major schemes led by national government. In these instances we feel that the Council should seek to recoup costs where possible. We would like you to look into this issue.

### **Householder Advice**

We were interested to hear about the Householder Development Advice Surgery provided by planning officers on a Wednesday afternoon. As not all members on the working group were aware of this service perhaps you could arrange for the details to be circulated to all councillors?

### **Relationship between Planning and Building Control**

While we did not discuss this with the officers at the meeting we nevertheless feel that there is merit in exploring this issue further. We therefore intend to raise it as an issue that the Scrutiny Programme Committee may wish to add to its forward work plan.

## **Your Response**

In your response we would appreciate your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically refer to:

- Our proposal that the enforcement backlog is monitored by the Planning Committee
- Our proposal that councillors are kept informed about planning related legal action relevant to their wards
- Our proposal that publicity for successful planning enforcements is improved
- Our proposal that the Council recoups costs associated with government sponsored major development schemes
- Our suggestion that details of the Householder Development Advice Surgery could be circulated to all councillors

Please provide your response by 16 April 2015.

**YOURS SINCERELY,**

COUNCILLOR DAVID COLE

**CONVENER, PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP**

✉ [DAVID.COLE@SWANSEA.GOV.UK](mailto:DAVID.COLE@SWANSEA.GOV.UK)