

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

PART A – SUPPLEMENTARIES

1.	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, D G Sullivan, L James, S M Jones, K E Marsh, I M Richard & G D Walker</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member explain to Council how the annual cost of £410 for travel on school buses for pupils not entitled to free transport is calculated?</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education</p> <p>Charging for spare places on school buses for pupils not entitled to free transport was an initiative of the former West Glamorgan County Council. Over the years the fee has increased with inflation and now stands at £410. The fee is £410 regardless of whether it is paid on an annual or termly basis.</p> <p>Full cost recovery would result in a charge of £701 per pupil.</p>
2.	<p>Cllrs Mike Day, Chris Holley, Mary Jones</p> <p>Given the statement by the Cabinet Member for Education at the last Council meeting (25th June) would she please tell Council what Education facility is she intending to put in the former Daniel James School?</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education</p> <p>Daniel James School is due to be cleared of all the accumulated equipment stored there at present. This will enable an accurate survey to take place.</p> <p>Cabinet will then decide on the way forward in meeting education needs.</p> <p>The Authority is facing additional cuts to its budget and the cost of keeping Daniel James School empty makes no sense.</p>
3.	<p>Cllrs Chris Holley, Mary Jones, John Newbury</p> <p>Would the Leader / Cabinet Member please tell Council if Swansea Council has any employees on zero hour contracts and if so in which departments and the reason why?</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance</p> <p>Zero-hours Contracts</p> <p>Zero-hours contracts do not have any legal definition. However, zero-hours contracts can be simply defined as:</p> <p>‘An agreement between two parties that one may be asked to perform work for another but there is no set minimum level of work or pay’.</p>

An employee would have the same rights and entitlements as permanent members of staff; except there are no guarantees on the minimum number of hours' work that they will be offered.

A review of the use of zero hour contracts was undertaken by the Authority in 2014 in conjunction with the Joint Trade Unions which resulted in the establishment of a Casual/Relief Policy.

Casual/Relief Contacts

Casual/Relief contracts normally mean there is no obligation for employers to offer work, or for employees to accept it. A Casual/Relief contract will give employment status for the duration of the assignment. Casual/Relief staff have the same employment rights as regular employees, although they may have breaks in their contracts, which affect rights that accrue over time.

Such employees will be used only if there is a specific business need to do so and it is not appropriate to employ casual/relief employees on a continual basis. In this connection, regular reviews of such contracts are undertaken to ensure they remain appropriate.

The Authority currently has 467 casual/relief employees (4% of the workforce). See Appendix A for a breakdown of these employees.

4. Cllrs Chris Holley Jeff Jones, Mary Jones

A recent article in the Evening Post (19th May) referred to Swansea Council buying the Oceana site. Does the Leader / Cabinet Member believe that this is a good use of public money as we are being constantly reminded of the difficult financial position the Council is in?

Response of the Leader

The acquisition and redevelopment of the Oceana site is an important catalyst for the wider regeneration of Kingsway and the city centre. The city centre framework identifies the opportunity to create a new central business district at Kingsway which will help create new employment opportunities in growth sectors such as tech industries. These industries will breathe new life into the Kingsway, stimulating new investment and creating better conditions for economic growth and increased footfall. In turn, this will further support the city centre's retail and leisure sectors, multiplying the effect of the investment. The Council and its partners in Welsh Government, through programmes like Vibrant & Viable Places, have aimed to target resources to facilitate and stimulate regeneration for the wider economic and social well-being of the area. In this context, I believe that the Kingsway project is potentially transformational for the city centre and represents good use of public money. The decision was taken after consideration of all advice given including an independent valuation and best value statement. The recommendation was made to Special Cabinet on the 30th April 2015. The decision to purchase the Oceana site demonstrates the commitment we have to regenerating the Kingsway area and the city centre and highlights that where necessary we will take steps to gain control of strategic assets to ensure the overall strategic master plan is delivered.

5. **Cllrs Mary Jones, Jeff Jones, Paul Meara**

The Welsh Assembly's Communities and Local Government noted in their recent report that they are deeply concerned about lack of progress in reducing poverty. Will the Cabinet Member tell Council what contribution he believes Community 1st areas have made to tackling poverty especially in those areas that include Target areas?

Response of the Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty

Overview

- Communities First is a community focussed anti-poverty programme with three strategic themes; Healthier Communities, Learning Communities and Prosperous Communities.
- The aim is to work with partners to contribute to narrowing the education/skills, economic and health gaps between our most deprived and more affluent areas.
- There are five Communities First Cluster areas in Swansea within which approximately a quarter of Swansea's population live.
- The Cluster areas cover geographic areas identified via the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, these include the Target Areas

Economic Circumstances

- Despite the current economic circumstances which has caused some challenge for the tackling poverty agenda there is clear evidence of the positive impact the Communities First Programme is having on Swansea residents.

Achievements by theme 2014-15

Prosperous Communities

- A total of 303 people directly support by Communities First into employment
- 71 young people (ages 16 – 24) gained an employment related qualification
- 612 people are more confident about managing finances
- 546 people are reducing or managing their debt
- 567 people have been supported to access the benefits they are entitled to

Healthier Communities

- 714 people with Increased physical activity
- 746 people more confident cooking a fresh meal.
- 1,593 people reducing risky behaviour.

	<p>Learning Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 376 people have gained a qualification • 426 adults are more positive about learning • 121 parents are more engaged with their children's school • 160 parents feeling more confident supporting their children's learning • 601 children and young people have a better understanding of the importance of school • 177 children and young people with improved academic performance
6.	<p>Cllrs Peter Black, Graham Thomas, Cheryl Philpott</p> <p>Will the relevant Cabinet Member make a statement as to what action is being taken to support and advance Swansea's City of Sanctuary status?</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty</p> <p>The City and County of Swansea has been supportive of people seeking sanctuary in Swansea. In December 2008, a motion was unanimously passed by the City and County of Swansea supporting Swansea becoming a City of Sanctuary (part of a national movement of local people and community groups working towards making their cities places of welcome and safety for people seeking sanctuary from conflict/persecution) and in 2010 Swansea achieved its status and national recognition as a City of Sanctuary. It was the first city in Wales to receive this and the second in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Cities of Sanctuary in Wales have recently secured Big Lottery funding to run a new project in Swansea and Cardiff, managed by Displaced People in Action. The project offers new ways to support asylum seekers and organisations working in the two Cities and is particularly interested in working within local areas where refugees and asylum seekers live and in this vein, is already linking with Communities First teams in Swansea.</p> <p>At present the City and County of Swansea continues to support positive work with asylum seekers and refugees in a number of ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • through the Change Fund which is granted to a small number of organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees such as Swansea Bay Asylum Seekers Support Group, Ethnic Youth Support Team, Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council and the African Community Centre • within Service areas particularly the Play Team, which Co – facilitates the BME Community Family and Play Work stream with City of Sanctuary and directs play opportunities and support provided for Children and Young People and families to include asylum seeker and refugee families; Housing Options who has a member of staff who provides advice and assistance to refugees who are threatened with homelessness. This especially applies to refugees who have recently received their status and have to move out asylum seeker accommodation; Communities First who engage with and include residents in their programme; and the partnerships Team of the Poverty and Prevention Service

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• through Helen Clancy, Principal Officer in the Partnerships Team, Poverty and Prevention Service who has time allocated within her role to assist in mainstreaming work with asylum seekers and refugees. This includes chairing the Swansea Asylum Seeker and Refugee Multi Agency Forum, being an active member of the City of Sanctuary Management Committee, providing feedback/links to the Welsh Government and Home Office through representing the Council on the Strategic all Wales Forums which influence the delivery of policy and practice in relation to asylum seekers and refugees, and delivering staff training.
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	PART B – NO SUPPLEMENTRIES
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