



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

To/ Councillor Clive Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance	<i>Please ask for:</i> <i>Gofynnwch am:</i>	Scrutiny
	<i>Direct Line:</i> <i>Llinell Uniongyrochol:</i>	01792 637257
	<i>e-Mail</i> <i>e-Bost:</i>	scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
BY EMAIL	<i>Our Ref</i> <i>Ein Cyf:</i>	SPC/2014-15/16
	<i>Your Ref</i> <i>Eich Cyf:</i>	
	<i>Date</i> <i>Dyddiad:</i>	6 May 2015

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance following the meeting of the Committee on the 13th April 2015. It reflects on the question and answer session held with the Cabinet Member about their portfolio responsibilities, including Corporate Culture, Sustainable Swansea, Commercialism, ICT / Digital Inclusion, and Sustainable Development. It includes conclusions and proposals for the Cabinet Member.

Dear Councillor Lloyd,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 13 April

Thank you for your attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 13 April 2015 answering questions on your work, and for submitting a written report ahead of the meeting. Your report provided a focus for the session and helped us to explore priorities, actions, achievements and impact, in relation to your areas of responsibility.

We noted that a large amount of your time since becoming Cabinet Member in September had been spent working on the Sustainable Swansea Programme and the budget. You stated that exciting projects were taking place despite the difficult financial circumstances. We are writing to you in order to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the committee, and raise any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

Corporate Culture

Amongst your various responsibilities, you highlighted work being undertaken to improve and develop the culture of the organisation and encourage innovation. We noted the establishment of an Innovation Programme and an

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GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

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Innovation Community to support the corporate change agenda. As you know one of our Panels is currently undertaking an inquiry on how service delivery can always be supported by a 'can do' culture. This inquiry will be reporting shortly, however committee members who are part of this Panel commented positively on some of things they have seen and heard from the evidence gathering.

You also highlighted efforts in making corporate documents, including performance reporting, more accessible. You were particular pleased with the new reduced Corporate Plan, focused on delivering five priorities.

Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future

You mentioned that you had oversight of the commissioning reviews being undertaken, following the recently approved budget, as part of the Sustainable Swansea Programme. There was some concern from the committee that, other than where scrutiny councillors have been proactive in seeking information about relevant services, it was not clear how non-executive councillors were being involved in these reviews, as well as considering the views of service users.

You confirmed that relevant Cabinet Members were responsible for scoping and undertaking specific reviews in conjunction with relevant Directors and Heads of Service. You agreed that input from scrutiny councillors was important to the quality of these reviews and would ensure that this is encouraged.

Your report provided some information about the impact of budget savings on staffing over the last 2 years. The committee asked if you were able to provide any indication of the picture across the council for the coming year, including schools in view of the 5% savings they have to make.

Commercial Council

You mentioned the approach to promoting a more commercial council – soon to be reported to Cabinet. You highlighted the need for the council to seize opportunities to generate income and be risk aware rather than risk averse. You mentioned that this work was in its early stages, and stressed that this was not an overnight process but very much part and parcel of the cultural changes that are being developed to ensure a sustainable council and sustainable services, at a time when budgets are being reduced.

We asked whether there was any learning from the experience of the Mid and West Wales Fire Authority, which has recently taken action to explore opportunities for income generation. We also suggested that consideration could be given to explore opportunities for income generation or budget saving through collaboration with other public bodies, e.g. providing services to or sharing services with organisations such as the DVLA.

There was some concern about expecting people to pay more every year for services (some of which may be diminishing) however you argued that people would be happy to pay for the right service. You stated that there is an increased focus on measuring customer service, demand management and better contact with and feedback from customers. We heard that the authority was in the process of appointing a Customer Services Manager and you admitted that in some areas of the council customer service could be improved. We look forward to hearing more about progress.

ICT / Digital Inclusion

You also spoke about developing a progressive digital culture and referred to the report which you took to Cabinet in November 2014 on the future of ICT provision and transition arrangements with Capgemini. You stated that you were committed to delivering services that were easy to access and cost effective. You referred to sessions in communities for the public to learn ICT skills as well as training staff to assist customers to access the council on-line. We talked about rural deprivation and you acknowledged the importance of public services (for example libraries) which can help support digital inclusion in such areas.

Sustainable Development

We received a question from a member of the public linked to your responsibilities for sustainable development and future generations. The question was from someone whose local company was involved in the sustainable reuse / recycling of waste electrical and electronic equipment and he wanted to know whether you would be embarrassed if a Swansea company were to establish itself in Spain, before Wales. You agreed, however, you highlighted that the Authority has led the way in Sustainable Development, which the Welsh Government has recognised. You referred to the work in respect of a district heating scheme and efforts to make Sustainable Development part of Local Authority's day to day thinking. You also made reference to introducing a balanced scorecard to ensure a more balanced view of organisational performance. You stated that you would be happy to meet the questioner to discuss any specific issues further.

We asked you about the financial benefits of sustainable development and you gave the example of the design of school buildings incorporating energy efficiency measures leading to reduced costs.

We queried the latest position with regard to the introduction / implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill, particularly the implications on the authority. Could you tell us about your role in taking this work forward in Swansea? Although the committee has set up a Sustainability Working Group to discuss things in more detail a short summary of your role would be helpful to the committee in your response to this letter.

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:

- The involvement of non-executive councillors and the public in Sustainable Swansea commissioning reviews;
- The current picture in relation to the impact of budget savings on staffing;
- What has been learnt from examples elsewhere to inform our new commercial approach;
- Our suggestion about collaboration with other public bodies in developing commercial opportunities; and
- Your role within the Cabinet in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill.

Please provide your response by 27 May. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available committee meeting.

Finally, we look forward to meeting you again to follow up on portfolio developments and hearing about achievements and impact.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

✉ cllr.mary.jones@swansea.gov.uk