

**Council – 26 November 2015**

**COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS**

**PART A – SUPPLEMENTARIES**

1.	<p><b>Councillor F M Gordon</b> Can the Cabinet Member inform Council whether the Purple weekend was a success in Swansea, and have Swansea been re-awarded the Purple Flag this year.</p> <p><b>Response of Cabinet Member for Wellbeing &amp; Healthy City</b> The Purple Flag weekend was taken as an opportunity to highlight the diversity and quality of the Night Time opportunities for leisure and entertainment in the city, which along with good management and customer care, was a key factor in the city's success in achieving the award of the Purple Flag. There were a number of eye catching initiatives put in place which attracted much positive comment and media coverage, as well as increased business and footfall. The Purple Flag weekend also provided a perfect link to the outstanding programme of music, arts and cultural offering provided through the Swansea Festival. Due to the success of the initiative this year, it is hoped to further develop it as part of Swansea's successful Night Time Economy in 2016.</p> <p>Swansea has applied for renewal of its award of the Purple Flag, and results will be known in January 2016.</p>
2.	<p><b>Cllrs P M Black, C A Holley &amp; M H Jones</b> Will the Cabinet Member tell us what assessments of the travel needs of learners has taken place in Swansea and how children and young people were consulted as part of these assessments.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education</b> The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure sets out the legal framework related to travel and transport provisions for learners travelling from home to school in Wales. The Measure places a legal duty on local authorities to assess the travel needs of learners in their area and to provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age who are attending their nearest suitable school and who meet the specified distance criteria.</p> <p>The current school population in Swansea is 35,500 pupils and of these, free home-to-school transport is provided for just under 5,000 pupils.</p> <p>The Council's Transport Team is advised annually in the spring term of the intake of new pupils to schools for the following September. Checks are then carried out to establish if pupils live further than the statutory walking distances from their designated school. This assessment takes into account those routes which have been classed as 'unavailable' as a walking route for school transport purposes using the revised guidelines published by the Welsh Government in June 2014. Those pupils that live more than the statutory distances from school or where there is no available walking route qualify for free home to school transport and this is arranged for them for the start of the</p>

	<p>autumn term.</p> <p>In addition to assessing the needs of the new intake of pupils each year, the School Transport Team receive updated information from each of the schools on those pupils currently receiving free school transport. These updates highlight pupils who have moved house, or left the school and the School Transport Team reassess their needs and amend the transport provision to reflect these changes.</p> <p>Pupils with special educational needs or medical conditions have their transport needs assessed by the SEN Panel as part of the statementing process. The school Transport Team then arrange transport appropriate to the children's needs as agreed by the Panel. There is an annual review of transport provision for SEN pupils to reflect their changing needs in conjunction with parents, the school and social workers.</p> <p>The travel needs of pupils are reviewed whenever they change address, change school or there is a change in their particular needs.</p> <p>Walking routes are reassessed wherever concerns are raised by pupils, parents or schools and also in cases when for example there is a change to the road layout, footways are constructed or closed or there is a new housing development.</p> <p>In the last year, the Council has developed a working partnership with South Wales Police in undertaking assessments of the social dangers of walked routes to schools and makes available forms for parents and pupils to give their views on the safety of walked routes.</p>
3.	<p><b>Cllrs P M Black, C A Holley &amp; P M Meara</b></p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member outline the Council's plans to improve access to Swansea West Business Park.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development &amp; Regeneration</b></p> <p>The provision of a new highway from the A484 Llanelli Link Road to serve the Business Park was agreed in the Local Development Plan (LDP) Preferred Strategy (2014). It will form an integral part of a strategic housing site release to the west of Fforestfach which was recently agreed by Council (Sept 2015). The road would be required to be built by, and at full cost to, the site developers (a national housebuilder), who have obtained development options for the various landholdings over which the road would cross. The road will form part of the masterplan for the site, which is to be prepared and consulted upon alongside the emerging LDP, and the delivery of the road will be ensured by legal agreement as part of a future planning application.</p>
4.	<p><b>Cllrs M H Jones, A M Day &amp; J W Jones</b></p> <p>Will the Leader/Cabinet Member tell Council if we are currently employing any Agency or Locum workers, if so how many and in which departments.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Transformation &amp; Performance</b></p> <p>See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of Agency Workers as the end of September 2015.</p>

5.	<p><b>Cllrs C A Holley, L G Thomas &amp; M H Jones</b>  Will the Leader tell Council how many Councillors have travelled abroad since 2012 in relation to Council business and how has this been funded.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader</b>  Since 2012, Twelve Councillors have travelled abroad to carry out Council business. Prior to each visit a business case was provided and deemed appropriate prior to any travel being undertaken. Some of the costs associated with the travel were met by Third Parties. No unnecessary travel was undertaken by Councillors and wherever possible costs were met by other parties.</p> <p>Five of the visits have been Civic Engagements carried out by the Lord Mayor and the remaining seven visits by Cabinet Members. The funding of the travel is outlined in Appendix 2.</p>
6.	<p><b>Cllrs M H Jones, P M Meara &amp; R J Stanton</b>  The Blue Plaque scheme has been very successful can the Cabinet Member confirm if the Council is still funding this scheme</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development &amp; Regeneration</b>  The present blue plaque scheme was commenced in 2013 and has run annually ever since. To date 12 blue plaques have been unveiled in locations ranging from the city centre to a small village near Rhossilli. Interest in the scheme has grown steadily and has generated a significant level of positive publicity. The last plaque was dedicated to the physicist Edward “Taffy” Bowen which drew 35+ people to a little lane in Cockett.</p> <p>Other plaques have been awarded to: Pete Ham (musician), Griffith John (Missionary), Emily Phipps (suffragette), Ann Julia Hatton (authoress), Cwmdonkin Park (connection to Dylan Thomas), Vernon Watkins (poet), Edgar Evans (Polar Explorer), William Robert Grove (Scientist and Judge), Kingsley Amis (novelist), Lewis Weston Dillwyn (owner of Sketty Hall), St. Helens Rugby Ground and E. G. Bowen (scientist).</p> <p>The scheme generates real interest in Swansea and those former citizens who have achieved success in their chosen field of activity, for minimal expenditure. The Blue Plaque Advisory Group met in late October to decide the subjects for plaques in 2016.</p> <p>It can be confirmed that we will continue with the blue plaques scheme next year but it is of course subject to budget availability.</p>
7.	<p><b>Cllrs C A Holley, J Newbury &amp; P M Black</b>  Since 2012 how many V.R. posts have been made and in what departments and what has been the cost to the pension fund.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Transformation &amp; Performance</b>  See Appendix 3 attached for a breakdown of ERVR applications which have been approved since 2012. There is no cost whatsoever to the Pension Fund</p>

as any Pension strain prior to normal retirement age is met by the Council.

**8. Cllrs J W Jones, M H Jones & P M Meara**

There are concerns being expressed about Sustainable Swansea and the implications that this will lead to between 2000 to 3000 staff being made redundant. Can the Leader confirm this is the case.

**Response of the Leader**

To suggest that Sustainable Swansea will lead to between 2,000 and 3,000 staff being made redundant is fundamentally flawed.

Jobs are at risk in Swansea, and in every Local Authority across Wales as a direct result of the austerity agenda being pursued by the Westminster Government in refusing to adequately fund Public Services and by passporting additional costs to Local Government in pursuit of National Policies.

All this at a time when overall National Debt continues to rise and, indeed, has risen by some 50% since the coalition first came to power, followed of course more latterly by a Conservative Government.

Sustainable Swansea is the overarching policy that the Council has adopted to deal with austerity, and has at its core a number of workstreams designed to deliver a balanced budget despite its effects. These include:-

- New Models of delivery
- Prevention
- Efficiency
- Stopping Services

Each of those workstreams has a number of delivery strands, such as re-commissioning of services, commercialisation and early intervention.

Avoiding job losses wherever possible is at the Heart of the Sustainable Swansea Policy and all Members of the Council would be better placed in engaging and supporting the Policy rather than questioning its purpose and potential outcomes.

The Council has an active and ongoing policy to reduce its workforce through Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy, Flexible Retirement, Flexible working and voluntary reduction of hours.

Where redundancies are made the Council will seek to redeploy and retrain staff for alternative roles where appropriate.

However, where savings requirements are such as to require redundancies, Members can be assured that proposals will be consulted upon with Trades Unions and affected staff in the normal way.

At a time when the Council is actively seeking to avoid compulsory job losses wherever possible it is simply not possible to quantify the number of jobs at risk which is dependent solely on the actions of the Westminster Government as to the degree and timescale over which it continues to pursue a fundamentally

flawed policy.

However, such is the scale of the savings requirement faced by the Council over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan then it is inevitable that due to the relentless ideological pursuit of the austerity agenda by the conservative government in London I, which recently announced a further 30% reduction to local government funding, future job losses are inevitable. The scale is uncertain but is likely to be substantial if austerity continues for another 5 years. However this council is doing all it can to limit the impact of austerity on the services and the workforce.

**PART B - None**