



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

**To/
Councillor Robert Francis-Davies,
Cabinet Member for Enterprise,
Development & Regeneration**

BY EMAIL

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SPC/2014-15/15

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*Date
Dyddiad:*

30 April 2015

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration 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 Civic Centre and St David's Site Marketing, City Centre Strategic Framework Review, the Kingsway, Culture, Libraries and Special Events.

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

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 detailed report ahead of the meeting. This report helped to provide a focus for the session and explore priorities, actions, achievements and impact, in relation to your areas of responsibility.

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:

Civic Centre and St. David's Site Marketing

We asked you to outline the thinking behind the marketing of these sites. The committee noted that this was a key part of the City Centre Strategic Framework. You explained the outcomes sought, including increasing the number of people working and living in the city centre.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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We heard that the Civic Centre site was considered to be the number one site of Welsh national priority, and was identified within the City Region as integral to achieving a vibrant city centre, to benefit both Swansea and the region, with a mix of leisure, shopping, eating, and living space that will improve the city centre offer and quality of environment.

The committee asked about which areas of the city centre could provide additional living space. We acknowledged that the expansion of Swansea University would inevitably lead to an increase in demand for student accommodation and many may desire to live in the city centre. However, we felt that there was a need for additional accommodation within the city centre other than exclusively for students or as social housing stock.

You mentioned that significant interest has been shown by developers and as part of the procurement process proposals would be coming forward for consideration. You reiterated however that the offer must be right for the city, rather than accepting development at any price. There was some concern from the committee about the current state of the economy and how we could obtain the best price for the site. You argued that we should have confidence about what we have in Swansea, and the Bay was unquestionably a fantastic site, and the development of the St David's site was long overdue.

We also queried the relocation of the central library and the archives service. You considered the library to be an important anchor for city centre footfall, and cited Norwich as a particularly good example. With regard to the archives service we heard that you were looking at a developing a partnership in order to provide a service jointly with the University and Carmarthen Council. We noted that a location was being discussed, although much of the service is accessed on-line, and consideration was being given to those who will need access to primary source material.

City Centre Strategic Framework Review

With regard to the City Centre Strategic Framework Review we noted that there has been wide ranging consultation on the quality and future of the city, and would be grateful if you could share the results of that consultation with the committee. We suggested that this should be available to all councillors.

We also talked about the plans for a business district on the Kingsway and what you meant when you referred to 'meaningful' office locations in the city centre core. You clarified that there was a particular aim to increasing office space in the City Centre and the Kingsway has been identified as an area with the greatest potential. You stated that this offered the opportunity for purpose built office space, as opposed to utilising / adapting existing buildings. We were told that the authority is looking at a purchase of the Oceana site for this purpose.

With regarding to supporting business elsewhere we noted progress at Felindre towards the establishment of a Business Park. Whilst this scheme looks very promising committee members wanted to bring to your attention some concern that members of the public have raised about access and safety around the roundabout off Junction 46 of the M4.

Kingsway

We asked about the current situation with the Kingsway with the erection of barriers following the recent accident. Assuming that this is a temporary measure committee members highlighted the need for a proper and holistic solution to improve safety along the Kingsway taking into account the needs of pedestrians, cyclists as well as retailers, looking at experiences and examples elsewhere to identify innovative solutions. At the moment the barriers reinforce the appearance of the road as a no go area for pedestrians, and for businesses. You shared our concerns and agreed that a thriving city centre depended on safe access to and through the city. We acknowledged that you would work closely with the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport in developing solutions that will benefit the city centre. You felt that a better public transport system was an important factor.

City of Culture / Creativity

We were interested in specific activities in relation to this. Of course Swansea missed out on the City of Culture to Hull last time around. You were keen that Swansea bid again, subject to finance and other priorities, but you were particularly proud of the cultural offering, and emphasised the importance of culture and arts in the development of Swansea as a city.

We asked about the Grand Theatre and whether there were plans to review entrance fees. You highlighted that the Theatre was already highly subsidised, and the key to the success of the Theatre was not necessarily the cost but the quality of the programme of performances and its appeal to a range of audiences. We were told that you were working closely with the management team on this.

Libraries

You were asked about progress with the review of library service, as it has been some time since a review was announced. We noted that you had asked for further work to be carried out as part of the review to ensure the review is thorough. You stated that the conclusion of the review was anticipated during the summer.

Special Events

The committee praised the quality of road races already established in Swansea, including the first half marathon which took place last year. On the back of this success we suggested that we should be looking at the feasibility of holding a marathon in Swansea. You agreed that this was worth pursuing and that thinking has already been done about possible attractive routes around the city taking in the most scenic locations, including the marina and bay.

Science City

The committee asked about what this meant in practical terms for the city. You clarified that this was about developing a strategic alliance with the city's two universities with close working and collaboration to support a knowledge economy, innovation, research and development in Swansea. You informed us that a concordat had already been signed with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and a further agreement was in the pipeline with Swansea University.

Your Response

While we hope that you find the contents of this letter useful and would welcome any further comments **we do not expect you to provide a response.**

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

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