

Council – 28 April 2016

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

PART A – SUPPLEMENTARIES

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| 1. | <p>Councillors C A Holley, L G Thomas & M H Jones
Will the Cabinet Member explain to Council and the public of Swansea what part did he or the Labour Party play in the re-opening of the LC (Swansea Leisure Centre). There is a statement in his recent Evening Post column which says "we have proved that arm's length companies work".</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing & Healthy City
As detailed in the Cultural Services Partnership Report there are a number of examples of how third party operators have made a success of running leisure and cultural operations.
In particular, the Leisure Centre, under the management of Bay Leisure Limited has performed above target during the last year and has effectively absorbed a reduction in the CCS management fee.</p> <p>The overall usage and income of the venue has increased for the eighth consecutive year and notably, the health and fitness suite has seen an increase, despite competition in the area.
The Council has retained involvement in the governance, with Councillors Andrea Lewis and Mandy Jones sitting on the Board and officers meet with the management and operational teams regularly. The Council has also retained ownership of the asset and subsequently responsibility for the structure and the partnership enables a sinking fund and reinvestment of surplus funds into planned and necessary maintenance, ensuring the venue is competitive, efficient and attractive. The sinking fund for the LC has been utilised for remedial work on the roof caused by storm damage and is being used to rectify a fault on the spiral staircase in the Fitness Suite.</p> <p>Performance is monitored by officers in the Council's Cultural Service team with the maintenance regime overseen by the Corporate Building & Property Service, who confirm a high standard is now achieved. Due to the independent structure and constitution, the company is able to reinvest funding across its estate to reduce the subsidy of the Authority at the LC and officers continue to monitor the effectiveness of this, within the governance of the LC Board.</p> <p>The full performance table in the Partnership report demonstrates why we can say arms length companies in Swansea are working well, highlighted by the reduction in the management fee since 2012 by some £130,000 with further reductions agreed. This is within the context of sustaining earned income and increasing usage by over 22,000 users during the reporting period ie. April 2012 to March 2015.</p> |
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2.	<p>Councillors A M Day, J W Jones, P M Black Will the Leader/Cabinet Member tell Council how many people have been employed by our Corporate Building Services over the last 3 months? What tradesmen are they and what projects are they going to be employed on.</p> <p>Response of Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance Corporate Building and Property Services have not taken on any trade employees within the last 3 months, the last trade employees were employed in November 2015 which included 17 plasterers, 6 electricians, 6 bricklayers and 3 scaffolders. These employees initially work within the Maintenance section on voids, adaptations, electrical installation contracts and day to day repairs.</p> <p>In addition to the trade employees CB&PS have also taken on 12 apprentices in 2015 (3 Electricians, 2 Plumbers, 4 Plasterers and 3 Bricklayers) and is currently in the process of taking on 14 apprentices for 2016 (3 Electricians, 3 Plumbers, 5 Carpenters, 2 Bricklayers and 1 Plasterer)</p> <p>Further trade resource and apprentices will be recruited throughout 2016 to assist the Council in delivering its Welsh Housing Quality Standard work and New Homes pilot project.</p>
3.	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, L James, S M Jones, K E Marsh, I M Richard, D G Sullivan and G D Walker Most councillors, like staff, have paid for parking permits. What is going to be done to ensure that sufficient space is available in both the Guildhall and Civic Centre car parks to meet the demand.</p> <p>Response of the Leader The reallocation of parking permits at both the Guildhall and the Civic Centre has been undertaken based on work styles to ensure that limited parking available best meets the business needs of the authority. The ratio of permits to spaces has to be done based on an over-allocation subject to “churn” of usage coupled with the fact that at any one time there will never be 100% attendance of Councillors or Staff. For this reason it can never be guaranteed that a space can be found in a preferred location however there are sufficient overflow car parks at Trawler Road, St Mary’s and the Recreation Ground. The management of spaces will be subject to constant review and more rigorous enforcement of Traffic Regulation Orders.</p>
4.	<p>Councillors C A Holley, J W Jones & M H Jones Will the Leader/Cabinet Member tell Council if we have received a letter of confirmation that the Welsh Government is giving us the £3 million to take the St.David’s development forward up to planning stage.</p> <p>Response of the Leader An in principle offer to support the request for funding of up to £6.2m in respect of the costs of working up the St David’s scheme to the point of delivery was made by Minister Hart on 17th March. This followed lengthy discussions with Minister Hart and Minister Hutt and leading WG officials over many months. It demonstrates the confidence and support WG have in the ambitious</p>

	<p>transformational scheme for Swansea. The offer is subject to the Council and Welsh Government agreeing a delivery model which meets the funding criteria and the necessary legal documentation needed to deliver the funding which will be taken forward in the coming weeks/months.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, L James, S M Jones, K E Marsh, I M Richard, D G Sullivan and G D Walker</p> <p>The head of the Welsh Retail Consortium has claimed that the National Living Wage will have a disproportionate impact on Welsh firms and that job losses will follow. What makes the Leader confident that 4300 new jobs will be generated in the city centre, many of which will be in the retail sector?</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>Regeneration of our City Centre is a Corporate Priority and is critical in creating inward investment and jobs in our city centre. Our programme is ambitious but provides over 500,000sq ft of new mixed use accommodation that has been identified in the City Centre Strategic Framework Review for delivery during the next 10 years. We are confident that with the assistance of key stakeholders the estimated construction and permanent jobs will be met and hopefully improved upon based upon the proportionate levels of anticipated development, floor space and investment value. In addition evidence is that introduction of the minimum wage and living wage has increased employment and not impacted it.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Councillors J W Jones, A M Day & P M Black</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member confirm that full cost recovery fees are to be levied against the take up and renewal of all third party lease agreements and will he also give some indication of the range of fees involved.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>Full cost recovery is expected in all circumstances to ensure that the authority has sufficient income to ensure sustainability of service delivery, however, each case will be considered on its merits and in some instances, costs cannot be legally recovered. Actual amounts recovered will also differ dependent upon the extent of work involved.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Councillors E W Fitzgerald, L James, S M Jones, K E Marsh, I M Richard, D G Sullivan and G D Walker</p> <p>Given the importance of ensuring that there are sufficient disposal facilities for dog faeces, could the Leader comment on the information that councillors wishing to install new bins must also pay an additional charge of £1200 per bin to cover emptying costs over a four year period.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport</p> <p>New bins (litter and dog bins) are not provided unless to replace those that have been damaged/removed or requested by a Councillor via their Community Budget (previously Environment Improvement Grant). Councillor requests to provide a new bin are considered on their merits based on the experience of the Area Supervisor/Operatives and the history of the area. In addition to dedicated dog bins, standard litter bins can also be used for the disposal of dog waste.</p>

	<p>The costs associated with the provision of new bins (including servicing costs) were agreed as part of the previous scheme. The costs are summarised on the attached document. As a condition of the Environment Improvement Grant, any initiative funded is required to be maintained and supported for a period of 10 years. As a compromise it was previously agreed that servicing costs (emptying of the bins etc.) would initially be funded for a minimum period of 3 years. A review is carried out after this time to determine whether the Councillor was prepared to continue to fund the servicing costs of the bin year on year.</p> <p>Since the new community budget scheme has been approved by cabinet a review of the pricing schedule is being updated and will be sent to all Cllrs within the next few weeks</p>
	PART B - None