

Council – 16 June 2016

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

PART A – SUPPLEMENTARIES

1. **Councillors A M Day, J W Jones & C L Philpott**

Given the damage caused to grass verges by vehicles parking on them, could the Cabinet Member inform Council:

- a). What the Council's view is on this practice
- b). What is the Council's view on residents placing stones, marker posts and the like on the verges outside their properties, and,
- c). What action is he taking to ensure that grass verges are not damaged by indiscriminate and inconsiderate parking on grass verges

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation

a) The Council does not approve of any verge parking, verges need to be kept safe and unobstructed particularly when they are at junctions. Parking on verges can cause problems eg. Obstruction, reducing visibility at junctions and causing environmental damage and appearing unsightly.

b) The placement of white stones and the like on the verge is a difficult issue. They can be considered to be an obstruction however they do serve to protect the verge from vehicle damage. Where boulders or similar objects are placed to preserve the appearance of a well maintained verge or grassed area and where they are clearly visible, well set back from the edge of carriageway and do not constitute obstructions of a hazardous nature (e.g. village green features etc.), the stance taken will be one of "non-disapproval". This means that we do not authorise their presence, as technically, they are still classed as obstructions, but no action will be taken to remove them. Sites where obstructions can be ignored is at the discretion of the Highways Service. Those placing stones or the like on the highway are at risk as they will remain responsible for any issues or damaged caused.

c) There are no general enforcement powers available to the Authority in relation to parking on a grass verge, unless there is a specific issue with safety (e.g. visibility at a junction) or unless a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) i.e. parking restriction exists. The police have the powers to enforce in relation to obstruction however they have indicated that unless actual obstruction is taking place they would not respond. Others options available to the Council include the introduction of TRO's or protection via bollards, street furniture or tree planting. There is an additional option to protect verges through the West Glamorgan Act however were offences to occur the only avenue is through prosecution in court (with the potential ability to levy a £500 fine), the resources involved in this are significant and there remains a risk as the legislation is not clear and is legally untested. These options are all resource dependant and only undertaken on by the service in relation to safety issues. The Parks service is responsible for verge maintenance however this extends only to routine maintenance and making safety of immediate significant danger and not general repair or protection.

2. **Councillors J W Jones, J Newbury & A M Day**
- a). How many Speed Indicator Display signs (SIDs) are currently deployed in the City and County of Swansea,
 - b) How many are actually operational,
 - c) How many and how often are they moved,
 - d). Where they are not operational, what programme is in place to bring them back into service,
 - e) What his medium term strategy is for the deployment of SIDs, and,
 - f). how is he reviewing the effectiveness of such speed reduction measures

Response of Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation

a) There are currently 136 sign faces, of which 85 are permanent with the remaining 51 No. being ground screw installed and capable of being relocated to other sites.

b) It is intended that all signs remain operational, however, there have been some issues with the solar powered signs in the winter months, where there is often insufficient periods of daylight to maintain charge. Some signs, in the more problematic locations, have been converted to mains power when finance allows. The solar powered signs are beneficial to allow quick and easy relocation without the need to provide mains power to the sign.

SID signs are not subject to the same annual inspection regime as other traffic control devices, and maintenance is on a reactive basis as faults are reported.

c) Initially it was planned to move these signs on a three monthly basis, however, the funding stream from the Welsh Government which was being used to undertake the sign rotation is no longer available to the Authority. Consequently, whilst the existing sign positions will continue to operate and be maintained, for the foreseeable future, it will not be possible to move them to new locations. As a consequence of this, as finance becomes available, it is proposed to systematically convert existing sites to mains powered units or review if they are still effective at their current locations.

d) Non-operational signs are attended to on a reactive basis, as and when faults are reported, to date this has proved more cost effective than entering into an annual maintenance contract. This will be reviewed later this year when the traffic signal maintenance contract is put out to tender.

e) There are no plans to increase the number of SID unless installation and maintenance costs can be guaranteed.

f) Surveys have been undertaken at some sites and this has shown that traffic speeds have been reduced where these signs have been placed e.g. Swansea Road Llewitha traffic speeds have been reduced by 4mph (eastbound) and 5mph (westbound).

3. **Councillors A M Day, J W Jones & P M Black**
- Will the Cabinet Member initiate and publish the results of a survey of all Councillors to ascertain how satisfied with the way potholes are being addressed

	<p>in their wards. Has this Council received any funding from the Welsh Government for pot hole repairs like the system which operates in England.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation</p> <p>a) The maintenance of highways including pot hole repair were part of the recent scrutiny review of Streetscene. This report and its findings have already been published. A further review of pot hole repair has been undertaken in relation to the public perception that the roads are poorly maintained. The Council are currently considering options in relation to this work however it is recognised that the repair of pot holes is undertaken against a backdrop of an ageing carriageway network with a £50m plus backlog of work.</p> <p>b) Has this Council received any funding from the Welsh Government for pot hole repairs like the system which operates in England.</p> <p>No the Welsh Government has not provided any additional funding this year in relation to pot holes.</p>
4.	<p>Councillors C A Holley, J Newbury & P M Black</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member tell Council what provisions are being made for our fisherman and their boats in the docks.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation</p> <p>European programme officers have been successful in securing funding to improve shore side services. A crane, commercial Ice machine, refrigerator & freezer have all been installed over the past 18 months.</p> <p>Plans are being made to increase electricity supplies to commercial pontoons over the next 12 months.</p> <p>There is currently a strong demand for 12 month commercial moorings. In addition short term moorings are offered to fishermen who require shelter during adverse weather conditions.</p> <p>The cost to moor a boat depends on the length of boat, type of mooring and duration. Charges range between £3.50 per day for permanent moorings to £17 per day for overnight visiting vessels. Most fishermen visiting overnight are not local fishermen.</p> <p>The Council recognises how unpredictable the fishing industry can be, therefore fishermen are offered payment plans with no premium to assist with paying the mooring fees.</p>
5.	<p>Councillors P M Black, J W Jones & M H Jones</p> <p>Given that this Council has a policy of increasing fees in line with inflation will the Cabinet Member inform Council what increases there have been since 2012 to the present time.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services</p> <p>Thank you for your question regarding fee increases from 2012 to the present</p>

	<p>time. A database of fees and charges was created in 2014 and is in the process of being updated for 2016-17 and has been requested for presentation to the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Panel in June by Councillor Holley and therefore the data will be provided to you as part of that process.</p>
	<p>PART B</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Councillors C A Holley, J W Jones & J Newbury What is the current position with asset transfers to community groups.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing & Healthy City On 18 Feb 2016 Cabinet adopted a policy with guidance on Community Asset Transfers with the stated intention of not only streamlining the process for when a request is made for an asset transfer but also ensuring a consistent approach. Officers are dealing with a number of current requests which are at various stages of the process.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Councillors M H Jones, J W Jones & C A Holley How many empty retail premises are there currently in the City Centre.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration The Council produce a City Centre Occupancy survey which is on our website: http://www.swansea.gov.uk/staffnet/citycentreresearch</p> <p>Having regard to the survey data for April 2016 there are 128 vacant properties in total and of these we estimate 33 are retail or restaurant premises in the prime and secondary retail areas. This excludes Kingsway.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Councillors P M Black, J W Jones & M H Jones Will the Cabinet Member give Council the full list of fees and charges and their increases annually since 2012 to the present time.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services Please see answer to Question 5 above.</p>