



**CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA**  
**DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE**

Councillor Mary Jones  
Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

BY EMAIL

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JR/HS

8 September 2016

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I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall, cysylltwch â'r person uchod.**

Dear Councillor Jones

I refer to your letter of 1 September 2016.

Thank you for the invitation to attend the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 8 August, I found it a very positive experience. The questions asked by the Committee members and the discussions around the Education Department's work really do assist in evaluating the Department's strategic planning and the delivery of services. I am sure the Schools Performance Panel can update you on the progress we have made in sustaining improvements in both G.C.S.E and A-level results. I am particularly pleased that the Reading and Numeracy Tests reflect the positive work in our primary schools.

In your letter you asked for some more detail on a number of issues:

**Tell us about the cost of legal fees incurred to date by the Council dealing with the village green application for Parc Y Werin, and likely cost should inspectors recommend an inquiry**

To date the cost of the Inspector's fees in regard to the Council's role as Commons Registration Authority is £3,066 and the additional information considered by the Inspector will incur further costs. These fees are likely to be in excess of a total of £20k with the need for a public inquiry. The barrister has agreed to a fixed fee of £15k which includes all advice and attendance at an inquiry. Internal legal staffing costs (already in excess of 115 hours), if charged, would to date represent a further £7k and this will also increase with a public inquiry.

**Clarify the area of the whole school build at Parc Y Werin (including outside play space) as a proportion of the park**

The size of Parc y Werin is 8.76 acres and the overall proposed school site is 3.212 acres, which is 37% of the total park area. Within that 3.212 acres, the school building



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footprint is approximately 0.563 acres, and 6.5% of the total park area. The remaining external area includes a car park, multi-use games area and 3G pitch which will be made available for community use. Consequently, only 2.463 acres will be removed from community use, which represents 28% of the total park area.

**Clarify the current position with Pupil Referral Unit accommodation and how you intend to tackle this issue in the coming months**

The City and County of Swansea (CCoS) recognises the need to overhaul its entire EOTAS Service to ensure future provision not only best meets the needs of vulnerable young people but provides sector-leading practice. The objective is to re-configure the service to build on existing good practice, transforming the provision to support vulnerable children and their families and to meet the requirement to provide suitable, full time education, in a timely manner, to those children and young people needing to be educated other than at school.

On 24 May 2016, the CCoS held a workshop, involving a wide range of delivery partners and stakeholders, to consider how the local authority could best support the needs of vulnerable learners in Swansea going forward. Officers are currently developing a comprehensive implementation plan, in conjunction with a wide range of delivery partners, to ensure the needs of this important group of young people will be met.

Swansea's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) currently consists of four types of provision. The Key Stage Education Centre (for key stage 4 pupils with social emotional and behavioural issues (SEBD) based at Brondeg House. The EOTAS Pathways (for key stage 4 pupils with (SEBD) also at Brondeg House. The Arfryn Education Centre (for foundation phase to key stage 3 SEBD pupils). Step-Ahead Education Centre, Gors Avenue (for key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils with anxiety disorders and mental health issues).

A key aspect of the provision of sector-leading practice involves the development of a safe, stimulating learning environment for young people educated other than at school. A set of requirements for effective EOTAS provision has been produced and shared with the Corporate Estates and Facilities Team, following a desire by elected members to widen the search for accommodation beyond education resources, and beyond council resources. Working with Corporate Property and Building Services (CPBS), officers are currently undertaking feasibility studies on a range of capital assets in local authority ownership for the relocation/co-location of the different elements of the PRU.

We have also recently advertised to secure a new Head of Swansea PRU. The successful candidate will assume responsibility for all pupil referral unit settings in Swansea along with the Behaviour Support Unit and the County's wider pupil behaviour strategy. We hope that this person will be in post during the early part of the new year.



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**Provide more information on the work of Challenge Advisors and standards, including their allocation across schools**

As of 1 September 2016, the primary challenge adviser team is at optimum capacity for the first time since September 2014. Six full-time equivalent challenge advisers are employed to serve primary schools. Five are full-time and permanent employees with the remainder being part-time seconded headteachers. One full-time challenge adviser divides her work between the pupil referral unit, the special schools and primary schools.

The secondary challenge adviser team should have three members. As of 1 September, there will be two full-time equivalent challenge advisers from the serving secondary headteacher population. Two recently retired headteachers will also work as challenge advisers on an infrequent basis to provide an interim staffing solution. One headteacher will co-ordinate the work of challenge advisers on a part-time basis until a permanent appointment is made. The third vacant post has been transformed into an executive leader post for secondary schools. A national advert for the Head of the Secondary Phase unit will be placed during the week commencing 5 September 2016.

Changes to allocations of challenge advisers to school are inevitable. Seamless handover is provided through joint visits and a single reporting system. Where possible, too many changes for schools that require more support are avoided. However, as schools develop a positive professional relationship with challenge advisers, it is sometimes difficult for headteachers to accept a new link adviser. For September 2016 there have been significant changes in the primary sector as a result of bringing challenge adviser capacity up to the correct level. There is greater stability within the service and the service provided to all school is more likely to be of better quality, as a result.

Standards for all key stages have been reported to the Schools' Performance Scrutiny Panel with 64.8% being the provisional figure for 16 year-olds in Swansea attaining the Level 2 Inclusive threshold, including Welsh or English and mathematics. As verified data is made available further updates will be provided.

**Confirm the current number of surplus school places, in both primary and secondary, and the associated cost**

As at September 2015, there were 3,952 surplus places across all schools within Swansea or 1.1%. This is currently projected to fall to 7.7% by September 2022. This compares favourably with the current levels across Wales of 17.7% and the Welsh Government guideline of 10%.

Estyn has tried to estimate an average cost (May 2012). On the basis of this methodology Swansea is already close to the national guideline figure of 10% and is projected to be well below in the future. Even on the basis of a tighter 6-8% threshold,



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the estimated 'cost' of projected unfilled places within Swansea by 2022 would be between £153k and £377k.

However, unless a surplus is in sufficient discrete 'blocks' it is not really feasible to remove and even if it is possible there is a significant cost to remove accommodation from any site. Often any surplus is spread over classes – a few in each class will appear as a sizeable total across the school as a whole, but again is not a cost which can be removed. Indeed, the Estyn study accepts that "the removal of surplus places in some schools may cost far more than the revenue savings achieved by their removal".

**Tell us about benefits arising from the new Education Support Unit.**

The Education Services Unit (ESU) was launched on 1 February 2016. This new process streamlines how the department deals with communications and commissions. With all correspondence being received and distributed through a single, non-personalised mailbox it allows for a more robust process in maintaining a log of all incoming and outgoing information, removes the personalised nature of responses from individual officers, provides a single point of contact for all incoming communications and commissions to be directed to, and ensures that all responses are provided in a timely manner.

**Provide a revised Education Department team / management structure with the names of lead officers in the various positions and service areas, including the number of staff in each area**

The revised Education Department structure is attached and now includes numbers for the corresponding Units.

I look forward to our next meeting. Please let me know if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

**COUNCILLOR JENNIFER RAYNOR**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION**