

Councillor Mary Jones
Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee

Please ask for: Councillor Mark Thomas
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Our Ref: MT/JW
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Date: 12 April 2018

Dear Councillor Jones

CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION – 12 FEBRUARY 2018

Thank you for your letter dated 15 March 2018 providing a summary of the main issues discussed at the above session together with the specific items you have requested details on:

With regard to the committees comment on pot hole repairs, it is a continuing problem for the service and an best practice recommendation that pot holes are fixed permanently on the first visit. In an ideal world every pot hole would be cut out and carefully compacted over a number of layers using quarry supplied hot asphalt in dry conditions, the surrounding road would be of good quality and able to support the repair, even if this was the case then some repairs would fail, due to a number of factors for instance spring water or a water leak coming up through the road.

In reality this is not the situation, repairs are carried out in poor weather on roads where the structure of the surrounding road is itself breaking up. Pot hole repair products are used as hot bitumen will cool and quarries close and the service needs a 24 hour response. Repairs sometimes cannot be carried out immediately due to safety and the volume of traffic and it may be necessary to revisit several time to hold the road together whilst waiting for a larger scheme (busy roundabouts being a perfect example).

Even with all the above considerations we hope to achieve at least 80% permanent first time. Managers/supervisors check a large sample of the work undertaken and where temporary repairs are undertaken without good cause this is raised with the team.

- **Provide a fuller response to the questions put to you regarding fly tipping:**

1. The number of recorded fly tipping incidents are reducing, falling from over 8,000 in 15/16 to just over 5,500 in 17/18. We have introduced a dedicated fly tipping team which regularly checks hot spots, to supplement our area based cleansing teams which deal with smaller fly tipping incidents. Our Enforcement and Cleansing Teams also work closely together to seek to resolve fly tipping issues and target breaches of the Council's 3 bag limit for domestic waste collections. I cannot separate out the cost of fly tipping from the overall cleansing costs with any accuracy as the services are combined.
2. The Council's Household Waste Recycling Centres are provided for residents to recycle or dispose of their own household waste. Information is provided on the Council's website regarding the location of the sites, the use of the sites and the materials accepted at the sites (see <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/recyclingsites>). Commercial waste is not accepted at Household Waste Recycling Centres. If it was, Swansea residents would foot the bill for these companies' financial benefit. To try and eliminate commercial waste being taken to Household Waste Recycling Centres the Council operates a permit system at Llansamlet and Clyne Household Waste Recycling Centres. (Vans and trailers are not permitted at Penlan, Garngoch, and Tir John as the sites are too small). The system only allows certain vehicles (e.g. sign-written vehicles, pick-ups, trailers, and vans) to access the sites with a permit. Permits are free for residents disposing their own household waste and can be used up to twelve times a year. Commercial waste is accepted at the Baling Plant, though is charged on a cost recovery basis. In accordance with the site license, checks are put in place to ensure that any commercial waste being transported to site is done so in accordance with relevant regulations. The Household Waste Recycling Centres accept a wide range of materials to allow domestic residents to recycle or dispose of their waste in a free, safe and convenient manner, therefore eliminating the need for fly-tipping. Commercial waste is readily accepted at the Baling Plant.
3. The Council's recycling team and communications team periodically run campaigns raising awareness of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. In recent years the Council has run promotions including: "Keep it to 3" which aimed to reduce the amount of recyclable items being disposed in kerbside black bags; "Keep it out" which aimed to reduce the amount of food waste and textiles being disposed as residual waste; "Household Waste Recycling Centre improvements", which aimed to reduce the amount of recyclable material being disposed in Household Waste Recycling Centre black bag skips. All these campaigns promoted the availability and convenience of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. As new recycling technologies or treatments become available the Council puts out press releases and adverts with information on the latest items which can be recycled. In 2018, the Council has promoted the availability of recycling at Household Waste Recycling Centres : single use drink cups (see

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/39250/Recycle-your-disposable-drinks-cups-in-Swansea>) and nappies (see: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/you-can-now-recycle-babies-14310537>), and food waste.

4. Without the power to stop vehicles, the Enforcement Team rely on joint working with the Police at key and frequent fly tipping hot spots to check vehicles for waste carrier licences. The latest initiative run last year was on Bog Road in St. Thomas.

- **Explain the lack of alternatives to the use of glyphosphate for weed control:**

We are only permitted to use weed spray approved for use in our environment. When we tender for the works contract we ask the contractor to provide details of the chemicals to be used and to confirm they meet industry standards. All of those tendering for the work recommended this product. We have examine the possibility of using other treatments such as hot water/steam but on a large area scale this is not feasible/cost effective. We attend the industry environmental forum on weed spraying and no other chemicals have been put forward as a viable alternative at this time

- **Update us on resolving the problems with car park ticket machines:**

Car parking ticket machines can break down from time to time, especially when located in an exposed and aggressive marine environment, we have a dedicated group of car park cashiers that will undertake first line maintenance to get the machinery back up and running, with more complex faults necessitating the manufacturer to visit to undertake repairs. It is acknowledged that there has been an unacceptable level of reliability with regard to the communications within some of the machines, which has led to an inability to accept card payments, this has proven even more difficult in some of our coastal car parks where communication signal reception is poor. This issue is not limited to Swansea but is an industry issue.

However, officers have been working with neighbouring authorities, through the British Parking Association, to develop a joint procurement opportunity, which will provide a number of benefits including greater purchasing power, better technical support from the chosen manufacturer (as they will have a greater concentration of clients within South and West Wales regions), greater emphasis for any contractor to perform, as failure will affect future contracts from the regions.

In the interim, the council has achieved recent success with resolving non-performance with a different contractor and intends to repeat this process with the current provider of car park ticket machines. As part of this process it is important to be able to demonstrate, to any future court, that Swansea Council has given the contractor every opportunity to rectify any problems and to document this process. It is a lengthy, time consuming and frustrating process, but necessary if the council is to be successful in any possible litigation. Progress hasn't been as quick as we would like, due to a changes in key personnel within the car parking section, and when dealing with contractual matters consistency of approach is key. However, I am confident that good progress is being made and that Swansea Council and it's neighbouring authorities will be able to provide good quality, reliable parking equipment with effective technical support in the near future. It is most unfortunate that the parking industry is currently plagued by such problems, however, it is expected that such combined procurement and bargaining power, brought about by regional collaboration, will bring about an improvement in service.

- **Tell us about current practice in relation to dealing with dog fouling**

Cleansing clear up dog mess as part of their cleansing rotas and on a complaints basis, although enforcing against dog fouling is extremely difficult as dog owners often only don't clear up after their dogs when no-one else is around.

Where significant hot spots are identified, they are monitored both early morning and early evening for up to ten days to seek to identify anyone not clearing up.

Yours sincerely



COUNCILLOR MARK THOMAS
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT SERVICES