



**Report of the Cabinet Members for Better Communities, Cllr Mary Sherwood (People) and Cllr June Burtonshaw (Place)
Scrutiny Programme Committee – 8 April 2019**

**Key Headlines: Cabinet Members for Better Communities
(People and Place)**

Purpose: This report outlines notable activities and achievements in terms of ensuring the delivery of key priorities within the Better Communities portfolio. It describes key activities within the portfolio and how they are implemented in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act). The report also identifies objectives, key challenges and decisions which are anticipated for Cabinet over the next 12 months. It also sets out how activity is aligned with the Public Services Board.

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1.0 The Portfolio for Better Communities (People and Place)

1.1 Key responsibilities within the portfolio include;

People (Cllr Sherwood)

- 3rd Sector Engagement
- Access to Services
- Community Cohesion
- Community Engagement
- Communities for Work
- Digital Inclusion
- Domestic Abuse
- Drugs / Alcohol
- Equalities & Diversity
- Food Banks

- Future Generations (Lead)
- Localised Services
- Poverty Reduction (Lead)
- Safer Swansea Partnership (Non City Centre)
- Social Inclusion
- Welfare Reform
- Welfare Rights

Place (Cllr Burtonshaw)

- Allotments
- Communities First
- Community Building Rationalisation
- Community Centres
- Community Cohesion
- Community Development
- Community Grass Cutting Services
- Lead Elements of Sustainable Swansea
- Libraries
- Litter & Community Cleansing
- Members Community Budget Scheme
- Neighbourhood Working
- Poverty Reduction
- Public Space Protection Orders
- Tend & Mend
- Weed Spraying Programme

1.2 The portfolio is shared, with the joint cabinet members dividing the items as listed. The Cabinet vote rotates every three months. During the months when one does not hold the vote, they count as a non-Executive Member in constituted meetings but maintain responsibility for work on their portfolio areas.

1.3 This report highlights the progress made and future areas of focus in relation to key priorities within the portfolio. The report also highlights other notable areas of achievement and focus for the longer term. In particular, the report highlights how the Well-being of Future Generations Act's (WFG Act) sustainable development principle is applied in terms of the five ways of working and maximising contribution to the seven national well-being goals.

2.0 Leading on the Well-being of Future Generations Act

2.1 Corporate activity to date has focused on implementing the high level requirements of the WFG Act focusing on key areas for change. In October 2018, Council reviewed the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives for 2018/22 taking into account scrutiny work on 'Swansea's Natural Environment'. This resulted in the adoption of a new Well-being

Objective. 'Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity'.

2.2 The objective will help the Council demonstrate its contribution to the goal of a 'resilient Wales', encouraging all services to maximise environmental well-being. The addition also improves alignment with the Public Services Board's 'Working with Nature' local well-being objective resulting in greater integration and facilitating better collaborative working with partners.

2.3 The development of a City Centre Green Infrastructure Strategy exemplifies the type of project driven forward as part of the new well-being objective. It also demonstrates how the sustainable development principle's five ways of working underpin how the Council operates.

- The project has been delivered in **collaboration** with Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- Its aims align with similar regional work undertaken by Public Services Boards ensuring **integration**.
- The **involvement** of the public is taking place at an early stage so feedback on the green future people want to see can be built into plans for the City Centre.
- This aims to result in **long term** outcomes improving biodiversity and the prosperity of the City Centre
- and the **prevention** of problems like air pollution, surface water and decline of visitors to the city centre.

Other examples include the adoption of a corporate tree strategy, a corporate risk of "Tree Loss" and future development of a Green Infrastructure Planning tool.

2.4 The Council has produced its first Annual Report (for 2017/18) using a new structure in line with the requirements and expectations of the WFG Act. Service Planning is a key mechanism where the WFG Act's principles are embedded into the way services are delivered. This process also helps services make sure that they maximise their contribution to each of the each of the national well-being goals. This process has been updated for 2019/20 to incorporate changes made to the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives.

2.5 The Council continues to pilot work that allows citizens to influence policy and service delivery through the development of a coproduction approach. Public engagement remains patchy however, resulting in low levels of involvement in statutory consultation and other interfaces; this is a cause for concern.

2.6 The Future Generations Commissioner has developed a suite of tools for supporting service design, projects and most recently scrutiny. These tools have been trialled by PDC's, the Swansea's Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry and adapted by services to challenge areas such as financial decision-making.

- 2.7 Moving forward, the Council will continue to implement the steps to deliver the Council's Well-being Objectives as described in the Corporate Plan - 2019/22 with progress reported in the Council's Annual Report. Service Plans for 2019/20 will be developed so that sustainable development principles are embedded and services demonstrate their contribution to the Council's Well-being and Equality Objectives.
- 2.8 This year will see the development of a programme and project plan to further to embed the sustainability principles of the Act into the business of the Council. In addition to corporate oversight and monitoring of the Council's Prevention Strategy.

3.0 Links to the Public Services Board and Local Well-being Plan

- 3.1 The Cabinet Members sit on the Partnership Board of Swansea Public Services Board (PSB) and contribute to the work of the PSB. In addition, Cllr Sherwood participates in the work of the Research Group and was involved in the establishment of the Strong Communities Objective Delivery Group.
- 3.2 Many areas within the portfolio link directly to the Local Well-being Plan and in particular the Strong Communities and Working with Nature well-being objectives. Significant third sector involvement in the PSB is supported by the portfolio's third sector engagement responsibility.
- 3.3 Groups with whom the Portfolio works such as the Third sector Liaison Group, Poverty Partnership Forum and Stronger and Cohesive Communities Core group can assist in acting as engagement and delivery mechanisms. The PSB and services working within the portfolio also mutually benefit from sharing research and information.

4.0 Equalities and Diversity

- 4.1 Swansea Council has undertaken a range of activities to support Equality and Diversity over the last year.
- Continued engagement with Swansea Bay LGBT forum and Disability Liaison Group (DLG)
 - The LGBT forum supported the first Pride event which was held in the National Waterfront Museum on 5th May. The first ever Pride parade took place which saw over 1,000 people march through Swansea City Centre. Figures for the National Waterfront showed over 3,000 people came and took part in the celebrations, which included entertainment and information stalls.
 - The Swansea Council Staff LGBT+ Group are a constituted group that meet regularly to provide a peer support network for LGBT+ staff, raise awareness of LGBT+ issues in the workplace and fundraise for LGBT+ charities, including World AIDS Day. They've held information stands at staff Health and Wellbeing

events, while some members of the committee are part of the council's bully buddy scheme providing dedicated LGBT+ support to those who require it. A number of members have publicised personal profiles on the staff Intranet that tell their experiences of coming out, and being an out LGBT+ person in the workplace.

- A scrutiny inquiry into equalities is taking place in which staff have taken part in a survey regarding the importance of equalities in the Council. The inquiry panel have also spoken to community groups, including the LGBT forum, the DLG, the South West Wales BME network, Older People's Network etc.
- Improvement to taxi licensing application process to ensure that greater consideration is given to equalities.
- EIA guidance has been further updated to encourage easier understanding and overall improvement to the process.

4.2 In order to ensure greater integration, departments now play a much larger role in ensuring the Council meets its duties under the Equality Act. In order to support and build capacity a network of Equality representatives has been established. These officers have to date received generic equality and diversity training and also specific disability awareness training. A session regarding GDPR and equality monitoring has also been given. Providing adequate resource to maintain the required levels of analysis and reporting while the workforce is being upskilled remains a challenge.

4.3 As part of the public sector's equality duty, the Council is required to publish annual equality and diversity review reports. These reports demonstrate progress against the equality objectives and include details of additional work that we have undertaken throughout the year. This responsibility is now discharged by the Strategic Delivery Unit. The report for 2017/18 was approved by Cabinet on 20th September 2018. The Annual Equality & Diversity Review Report for 2018/19 will be published in September 2019. Work will begin during 2019 on the development of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24 to be published in April 2020.

4.4 The Welsh Language Standards report help monitor and demonstrate progress. Responsibility for this work now rests with the Welsh Translation Unit.

4.5 The Council seeks to ensure that all its plans, strategies and policies do not discriminate against any group or person and that they promote Equality and Diversity in the local area. The Council has continued to equality impact assess all of its decisions, including the recent Budget proposals, as required by law.

4.6 Work with partners to explore Swansea becoming a Human Rights City has continued. This aim is also a step contributing to the Stronger Communities Well-being Objective within PSB's Local Well-being Plan. Work has progressed via a Steering Group led by Swansea University

and has benefited from the attention of the Poverty Reduction PDC. A 'Statement of Intent' is under development and potential pilot projects are being developed.

5.0 Community Cohesion

- 5.1 Community Cohesion work over the past year has successfully engaged councillors, multi-agency staff, volunteers and individuals in countering negative messaging concerning sections of our community. Myth-busting information has been developed and shared to help counter misconceptions. More work is needed to ensure councillors are fully confident with these messages and aware of how they can help.
- 5.2 The service supports interactions that bring groups together such as the Inter-faith Group which brings religions together, Swansea University's The Bigger Picture Festival, and the annual Eid in the Park event. A new group was established in January 2019, the Stronger and Cohesive Communities Network. This solutions focused group is preparing a priority/issues plan with six key areas each taken forward by an accountable organisation.
- 5.3 Hate crime reporting and intelligence at the community level is supported with a partnership approach in place with South Wales Police. A train the trainer Hate Crime session took place in February to raise awareness across participating organisations.

6.0 Poverty Reduction

- 6.1 The Swansea Poverty Partnership Forum has met quarterly throughout 2018/19 providing a floor for partnership discussion, sharing of knowledge, best practice and development of partnership working. The Forum has considered many topics including Universal Credit and the predictions made by the Policy In Practice data analysis, Swansea Working, Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and Holiday Hunger. Membership has grown over the previous year with many organisations represented at the forum.
- 6.2 The Financial Inclusion Steering Group has also met quarterly through 2018/19 providing the opportunity for organisations involved in the provision of financial support. This has been particularly useful during the roll out Universal Credit in Swansea which has dominated the agenda throughout the year. Several pieces of work have been delivered through the group including the production and distribution of the 'Quids In!' guides and the delivery of the Loan Shark Awareness Training to front line staff in Swansea.

- 6.3 The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee has looked at a number of issues over the year. Most recently it has considered the impacts of High Cost Lending and has developed an Action Plan.

A series of successful meetings were recently held to explore the interest in developing a Poverty Truth Commission for Swansea. Facilitated by Andrew Grinnell (Leeds Poverty Truth Commission), the three meetings engaged with Civic Leaders, key organisations and people with lived experience of poverty. Preparations are being made for the next step of setting up a 'Start-Up Group' and identifying potential Commissioners.

- 6.4 Poverty Forum: This internal piece of governance for the Tackling Poverty Strategy pre-dated the strategy and since its adoption has waned in focus and effectiveness. The Interim Chief Executive intends to use the Poverty Truth Commission as a mechanism to bring new focus and energy to the forum and hopefully improve its ongoing effectiveness.

7.0 Welfare Reform

- 7.1 The final 'Policy In Practice' analysis of Swansea's Single Household Benefit Extract took place in September 2018. A Data Sharing Agreement has been written and approved that allows the household level data to be utilised in order to provide offers of support to targeted and selected cohorts.

- 7.2 Swansea are not committed to any further Policy In Practice analysis. However, Welsh Government have commissioned Policy In Practice to carry out a Wales wide analysis, local authorities across Wales will be required to submit their Single Household Benefit Extract Data for the analysis. At this time it is uncertain what level of data will be made available to local authorities to utilise in the mitigation of the impacts of multiple welfare reforms.

8.0 Welfare Rights

- 8.1 The welfare rights advisers remit is to increase welfare rights awareness and knowledge of the workforce in Swansea in order to increase capacity to try and meet demand. They do this by providing training on a range of welfare benefit issues; an advice line; appointments for appeal representation and complex casework; publications and self-help guides and policy work.

- 8.2 The work of the welfare rights team has resulted in changes at both a national and local level; for example the results of a mini take up of former Incapacity Benefit claimants migrated to Employment and Support Allowance was fed into a national campaign which resulted in the Government agreeing to revise all claimants awards of Contributory Employment and Support Allowance. The result of this take up campaign increased average weekly income by £62.53 and a backdated lump sum payment of £6,089.20 for each of the 17 claimants involved.

- 8.3 In the financial year 2017/18 the team raised £1,154,597.16 by securing rights and entitlements to welfare benefits. This is worth £5,772,985.80 to the local economy. From April 2018 to December 2018, the team have raised £707,606.57 by securing rights and entitlements to welfare benefits. This is worth £3,538,032.85 to the local economy.
- 8.4 The work of the team has in many of the cases prevented eviction proceedings being enforced and has reduced both rent and council tax arrears, this has impacted on all services, including child and family because the children are no longer at risk. In some cases an award of a disability benefit not only increases income but will prevent claimants moving over to Universal Credit in the short term and when they do, they will receive significantly more income going forward.
- 8.5 The team are currently working closely with Child and Family Services to identify potential savings and encouraging staff to contact the team when there are benefit issues instead of signposting out to other organisations. A quick phone call to the advice line could save time, money and resources.
- 8.6 It is recommended that the effective use of Welfare Rights by Social Services (Adult and Child & Family), Housing and other teams which come into contact with families under stress be promoted and scrutinized. Benefit under-claiming remains a huge issue and households affected by welfare reform are at risk of becoming high-demand users of our costly services, where effective income maximisation could de-escalate their issues.

9.0 Communities for Work

- 9.1 Communities for Work is co-delivered across Wales with the Department for Work and Pensions. In addition, Communities for Work Plus commenced in January 2018 providing employability support for those clients in and around delivery areas who may not be eligible for Communities for Work or other ESF funded provision. Both programmes provide a comprehensive offer.
- 9.2 There is close working with a number of employability programmes, (that fall under the Swansea Working umbrella). Delivery also takes place with the two other Swansea Council delivered programmes Cam Nesa and Workways Plus. These programmes have achieved a combined conversion rate of 37% helping a total of 438 people into work.

10.0 Swansea Working

- 10.1 Swansea Working is a collaboration between Workways, Communities for Work and Cam Nesa is and has been very productive and successful to meet the needs of the citizens of Swansea in relation to pathways to employment. Swansea Working has delivered 39 training courses/upskilling opportunities, programmes within Swansea Working have provided close to 400 vacancies in the hidden job market for participants to access.
- 10.2 Sector specific, participant engagement, information events and discovery events have taken place producing over 150 referrals into employability programmes. Over 20 new partnerships have been developed in addition to many existing partnerships to support citizens in numerous aspects of employability support.
- 10.3 1325 referrals were received through the Swansea Working referral system from May 2018 to March 2019. This resulted in over 450 job outcomes, over 370 achieving accredited training and over 220 participants from 14 partners accessing sector specific training through Swansea Working until the end of March 2019. The extent of collaborative working is evidenced by the fact 38 partners receive referrals or refer into the system.

11.0 Communities First

- 11.1 The Legacy Fund has enabled progress to be achieved within the areas of tackling child poverty and mitigating adverse childhood experiences, and enhancing employment support provision through the development of a single employability offer. Developments include the continual engagement and participation of individuals in activity delivered through third party deliverers based in communities. Much of this work is targeted at families and children but project monitoring reports a consistently high engagement and participation rate in the project work funded through the programme.
- 11.2 Progress has also been made with the enhancement of employment support and development of single employability offer. Highlights include the development and implementation of the Swansea Working referral system, the Swansea Working Offer, sector specific training opportunities and establishing and maintaining relationships with key organisations who deliver employability support in the area.
- 11.3 The Legacy Fund has also supported the financial inclusion and welfare rights agenda through funding two specialist posts. These posts are aligned with our employability delivery and existing project work in the communities, and meet a clear community need, (with the ongoing implementation of universal credit and financial inclusion issues experienced at a community level).

12.0 Community Engagement

- 12.1 Over the last year, the Council has undertaken a number of formal statutory consultations and more informal surveys to seek the views of staff and members of the public. For example, we undertook extensive consultation around the changes to residential care and day care provision in Swansea. Our yearly budget consultation in December helped shape how the Council will save money over the next 12 months.
- 12.2 The need for surveys and engagement tools to be as accessible and “plain English” as possible - within the legal constraints that shape statutory consultation - is under discussion.
- 12.3 Various teams have provided advice and support to inform engagement activities within Departments across the Council such as Pupil Voice, the Big Conversation, Housing Tenant participation and engagements around regeneration projects. Councillor Champions have also been developing relationships with relevant groups of service users and residents to improve and support engagement.

13.0 Third Sector Engagement

- 13.1 The Council’s Compact with the third sector has been successfully launched. Work is beginning forming the Third Sector Liaison Group which will take forward discussions relating to initial topics for focus, funding, and contracts, etc.

14.0 Digital Inclusion

- 14.1 Swansea Council continues to roll out its successful Get Swansea Online programme. The KPI target for digital inclusion measures the number of attendees of the ‘Get Swansea Online’ courses. The 2018/19 target is 440, and the Council had 453 attendees. In line with the involvement principle, the courses have taken place in 17 locations across Swansea, which includes three quarters of the libraries.
- 14.2 Moving forward, work on a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Implementation Plan is in progress. This aims to integrate with the Welsh Government Digital Inclusion Strategy. A draft framework will be ready by April 2019.

15.0 Safer Swansea Partnership

- 15.1 The Street Vulnerability Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is now working to support 29 individuals.
- 15.2 Swansea’s Pupil Voice Forum worked with the Partnership to provide a workshop and Q & A session exploring what young people saw as risks to them from a community safety standpoint. It was interesting to see that the themes identified did not reflect our current expectations or planning assumptions.

The crime prevention themes highlighted were bullying, safety online, respect/homophobia, healthy relationships, substance misuse and personal safety. Far different from the traditional community safety areas of anti-social behaviour and arson. They have also facilitated performances in schools exploring bullying, burglary, hate crime and scams.

- 15.3 The Partnership plans to actively participate and support the principles of contextual safeguarding in our approach to safeguarding and community safety. The outcomes from the successful Pupil Voice project will help inform our work, and there are good opportunities to take forward work regarding awareness campaigns and future engagement.
- 15.4 The rising challenge of Substance Misuse is being addressed via joint working facilitated by Swansea and NPT PSBs and Western Bay. This has led to the formation of a Critical Incident Group which has increased understanding of County Lines and associated impacts. More importantly, collaborative action has been taken (for example a awareness raising communications campaign) and an action plan has been agreed moving forward to be monitored by the PSBs.

16.0 Domestic Abuse

- 16.1 The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategic Partnership Group have reviewed the objectives in the strategy and established actions for 2019/20. These include projects working with young people to ensure they have healthy, safe and equal relationships.
- 16.2 Swansea One Stop Shop Partnership - Multi-agency dialogue is continuing to ensure we continue to work in partnership to meet the needs of citizens.
- 16.3 A Swansea and Neath Port Talbot commissioning review of domestic abuse provision aiming to ensure that service delivery models are of good quality, financially sustainable, and meet strategic and legislative requirements. The focus of the review will take into consideration the five ways of working and ensure we develop robust data collection across services to evidence impact and ensure there is a continual understanding of client groups and client need. A working group will establish a training package and timetable for delivery.
- 16.4 In 2019/20 a new partnership agreement will be developed with service users to ensure there is an agreed way of working so people can get the right support at the right time, to enable them and their family to feel safe and not afraid, now and in the future.

17.0 Community Centres / Community Development

- 17.1 The role of the Community, Partnerships, Destination & Development Section, given its limited staff resource, is to act as community enablers to support groups and empower the volunteers.

The last 18 months has seen a strengthening of Friends of Parks groups, 11 of which have been established, with 28 in total. There are 38 Community Centres with voluntary management committees, 19 self-managed football pitches and 16 bowling greens.

- 17.2 Financial investment in community centres and parks has been significant over the last two years, due to external funding from Beyond Bricks & Mortar, third party investment and by voluntary groups.

- 17.3 The Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Panel has received a report on Community Groups and Community Centres which outlines the general activity and position of Groups and Centres for the last 12 to 18 months.

- 17.4 Challenges going forward are staff resources versus expectations and quality support and guidance for the newly established community groups.

- 17.5 Future activity includes an on-going discussion with Friends Groups on a "Memorandum of Understanding". The asset transfer of Coedgwyllim Park to a partnership model of Community Council/Friends group. and two new community centre models going forward, Parc Y Werin & Discovery Centre, Brynmill Park.

- 17.6 Community development is about working together with people and communities to establish strong, mutually supportive ways of meeting the challenges. Our approach is to ensure successful community engagement to create safe, strong and cohesive communities by building community spirit and pride and encourage people to take an active role in their communities. Our aim is to build community capacity for self-help, use community assets to support local action and increase and support voluntary sect.

18.0 Localised services / Community Hubs

- 18.1 Services in the Community is an important project within the Council's cross-cutting transformation programme. It looks to establish new ways of working in communities across the city by exploring how services can be co-located and integrated in a type of "community hub"

These projects are a well-established way of providing services differently and innovatively, by locating partner organisations alongside council services. Hubs also involve the community in aspects of design and development to ensure that better joined up services support residents in what matters to them.

18.2 Looking at how services can be provided differently in our communities aligns to many of the national and local priorities around the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Wellbeing objectives as part of the Swansea Public Service Board as well as the Council's own well-being objectives.

18.3 A pilot project My Clydach was launched in Clydach in October. This has successfully involved local people, councillors, partner organisations and the community and voluntarily sector groups. In addition to library services, the site offers agile working space, access to a wide range of Council Services, training courses, job centre services and the area's PCSO.

This approach contributes to a resilient and globally responsible Wales by minimising travel outside of the locality, supports the prosperity of the local economy, a vibrant culture and Welsh language through the provision of cultural services, enables a cohesive community by bringing people together, combats loneliness improving mental health leading to a healthy Wales and offers opportunities creating an equal Wales.

19.0 Allotments

19.1 In order to ensure the long term sustainability of Swansea's allotment sites. Cabinet approved a plan to transfer responsibility to allotment societies. Advice to support allotment societies and Council in the process is being provided by the National Allotment Association. A lease is in the process of agreement, working with the allotment societies.

20.0 Libraries

20.1 Swansea Library Services' performance is measured in relation to the national Welsh Public Library Standards (WLPS). The 2017/18 Annual Assessment Summary Report noted

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being.
- Improved monitoring and reporting
- Usage generally remains above the median for Wales, although there are reductions in the number of physical visits, active borrowers and overall book issues.
- Targets for overall acquisitions and for materials in the Welsh language are still not met, although the service is increasing its

investment in Welsh language resources, with a greater emphasis on encouraging their use.

- Overall staff numbers, and the level of professional staffing have both fallen, and neither target is met. Numbers of professional staff are now close to the lowest in Wales, and the service is increasingly reliant on agency staff to maintain service delivery. The planned review of work plans / staffing needs will be key to ensuring service sustainability in this area.
- Total revenue expenditure has increased on 2016-17, with the average per capita investment in library services at the median level.

20.2 The Report concluded 11 of the 12 core entitlements were met and of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Swansea Library Service achieved 7 in full and 1 in part. It is also worth noting that the previous Service Manager was absent on long term sick leave for over a year, prior to retiring, but this 'gap' has been addressed with the appointment of a qualified, new Manager last summer.

20.3 The service can now move on with focus and clarity on its wider objectives, which are closely linked with delivering the Council's Corporate Priorities. Service planning is currently underway and a new strategy for transformation, partnership working and cross Service integration in Culture, Place and the Council is under review. The key objective is for a sustainable, resilient service that continues to provide a comprehensive and efficient service for Swansea.

20.4 In addition a review of community services and community libraries was completed and has contributed to savings as part of budget proposals for 2019/20. Next year will see the implementation of changes to community library and Central Library opening hours in order to make savings in line with the 2019/20 budget.

21.0 Member Community Budget Scheme

21.1 This scheme supports delivery of small local measures that are a priority for individual Members and their local community but are not funded by other Council budgets.

21.2 Members can allocate funding to any scheme (providing it is legal, complies with the Council's constitution and the Council's policies and procedures) and can be used to: initiate or support community projects to improve health and wellbeing, improve Council owned land and/or public rights of way, improve community services or facilities, address safety issues, contribute towards the Council's costs in facilitating local events or markets, produce leaflets and information promoting the local area (but not promoting individual businesses and/or organisations), provide grants totalling up to £3,000 per year, per Councillor (maximum £15,000 over the five-year term) to community groups, contribute

towards the Minor Works Budget, create or enhance an asset or provide match funding to support or extend projects.

- 21.3 This scheme has proved popular with the public over the past year, with wildflower seedings and WW1 centenary celebration poppies attracting praise.

22.0 Community Improvement Activities

- 22.1 Litter picking and Community Cleansing activities are carried out by a wide range of voluntary groups and individuals. In order to encourage and support safe activity, guidelines are in the process of being produced. One set of guidelines provide information for councillors so they are well informed and able to support residents. Guidelines are also being produced to directly support citizens. This action prevents adverse outcomes and improves involvement enabling citizens to engage with the Council proactively.

- 22.2 The Tend and Mend scheme was set up to help the increasing number of elderly and disabled council tenants who need help with keeping their garden in a reasonable condition. This basic garden work includes grass cutting, hedge cutting and cutting removal. Demand for this services is very high.

- 22.3 Weed Spraying Programme - Over the last year, three sprays of the network have taken place to address weeds in order to ensure the long term sustainability of infrastructure and improve accessibility of footpaths etc. for the public. Where possible we have reduced our spraying on verges around posts, safety barriers etc. letting it grow and replacing spraying with several of rounds of strimming. This reduces the environmental and bio-diversity impact of maintenance programmes.

While a number of different glyphosate products are currently used to treat weeds in the city. Swansea Council operates in full compliance with WLGA review on the subject. Risk assessments and safe working practices are in place for the benefit of staff.

This topic was investigated by Scrutiny as part of the 2018, 'Swansea's Natural Environment'. However due to the complexity and wide ranging nature of the issues and potential health risks for people and animals, it is likely this topic will be specifically addressed by a working group or Inquiry in the next twelve months. However there is ongoing compliance with industry recommendations and the activity will be reviewed in the future if new, alternative methods become practicable.

22.4 Area working is undertaken by Highways Maintenance to co-ordinate a localised response to issues such as potholes and footpath problems in areas across Swansea. This service was nominated as best improver in the APSE performance network reflecting the effectiveness of an integrated approach.

22.5 Moving forward, the challenge will be maintaining the standards set this year in meeting the Pot Hole Pledge. The sustainable development long term and prevention principles are reflected in the whole life approach applied to making highway maintenance decisions.

23.0 Financial, Legal and Equalities Implications

23.1 There are no equality, legal or financial implications associated with this report.