



**To/
Councillor Mark Thomas
Cabinet Member for Environment &
Infrastructure Management**

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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SPC/2019-20/13

09 April 2020

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Committee on 10 February 2020. It is about Street Lighting, Cycleways, Parking Policy and Control, Highways and Engineering, Tethered Horses, Waste Management & Recycling, Air Quality Management, and Public Transport.

Dear Councillor Thomas,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 10 February

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 10 February 2020 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management.

We are writing to you at a time of national emergency and hope this letter finds you well. Although scrutiny meetings are currently suspended until further notice, because of the coronavirus pandemic, we wanted to get this letter out to you, as we would normally do, hoping that in due course we can resume our work.

We appreciate you providing a written paper in support of your appearance at the Committee meeting. The Q & A session gave us an opportunity to explore priorities and achievements in relation to your areas of responsibility.

This letter reflects on what we learnt from the discussion, shares the views of the Committee, and highlights any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues are summarised below:

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Street Lighting

You were asked a question from the public gallery about road safety along Fabian Way, one of the major road arteries into the city. There was concern about the number of street lights not working between the junction with Crymlyn Borrows and the junction with Wind Street (a figure of 60% was mentioned) causing a safety issue for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers from poor illumination, as well as creating a poor first impression for visitors. The member of the public mentioned that there have been a number of road traffic accidents on this road, including some fatalities.

You responded that an assessment of this will be undertaken as to why this is the case. You added that there could be three reasons for this (1) not working, (2) switched off, or (3) structural removals. Your understanding was that none of the accidents on Fabian Way were attributed to lighting issues but would look more closely into this. You undertook to provide a full written response to the concerns raised.

We noted from your written report that a detailed asset management plan of all the street lighting assets is currently being produced, which will enable long term funding needs to be identified and prioritised.

Cycleways

We invite all non-executive councillors to submit questions for each Q & A Session and, on this occasion, the Committee was requested to ask you about progress with the proposed cycle route from Grovesend and Pontarddulais, and expected start date. You stated that a bid has just gone in with the Welsh Government, but this project does require land purchase, which can take time. You were hopeful of buying the land this year with a view to implementation in 2022.

Parking Policy and Control

We raised with you a further question submitted by a councillor not on the Committee. The concern was about the extent of pavement parking throughout our communities and asking whether the Council would be enforcing a policy to stop pavement parking.

You recognised that this is a contentious issue in many wards but currently there was no power to address it at local authority level. We noted that the Welsh Government is setting up a review of this issue and will look at it on an all-Wales basis.

Highways and Engineering

The Committee asked you about progress with delivery of Councillors highways schemes.

You acknowledged that importance of getting these schemes moving forward. It was noted that we have been successful in getting grants but you stressed that the grant application process takes staff away from implementation. We raised some about resources / staff numbers in that team and whether this needs to be looked at. The Committee would appreciate further information on progress with schemes.

Tethered Horses

As you know the issue of Tethered Horses was looked a few years ago by a Scrutiny Working Group however at the last time this was followed up we were aware that things have improved. We heard that Friends of Swansea Horses and the Council had put together an Equine Working Group, including partner agencies and charity organisations, looking at issues with horses within the City and County. You stated that all actions have been completed and it has been agreed that the group is no longer needed. We were pleased to hear that this co-ordinated action achieved a reduction in tethered horses across the city. You assured us that much stricter controls are now in place and officers are keeping an eye on the hotspots and this situation continues to be under control and monitored.

Waste Management & Recycling

We asked about progress with regard to the recycling of wood and associated issues. We noted difficulties around the recycling/treatment of wood waste and need to closely monitor due to different grades of wood and segregate to improve the recycling of wood. We also have to pay to dispose of wood unlike some other recyclables that provide an income.

We heard from you that there has been a decrease in the amount of wood collected in Swansea since changes were introduced at recycling sites. However, you told us that there has not been an increase in fly tipping either. There was some concern amongst Committee members that people might be burning it.

Air Quality Management

We understood that the Council is updating its Air Quality Action Plan to maintain compliance and further reduce public health exposure to pollutants. We asked about its preparation e.g. who will be involved and whether there will be councillor and public consultation.

You recognised that this was a serious ongoing issue and the draft Air Quality Action Plan would be out for consultation in April. You confirmed that it will involve community groups and anyone who wishes to respond, and welcomed the views of scrutiny councillors. We will look out for the consultation and consider how best to feed into this.

We also asked about the monitoring of air quality around schools and actions taken if spikes occur. We noted that monitoring does take place around schools but no emergency action has been necessary because measures have indicated compliance with national air quality standards.

There was also some concern around the plans to dump more mud from alongside a nuclear power site in Somerset into the sea off Cardiff Bay, and what effect this might have on Swansea. You told us that Natural Resources Wales was responsible for the licensing and monitoring of any such application for the disposal of such material.

Public Transport

There was some discussion around usage of public transport in Wales and data that would appear to show that Swansea had the lowest take up in the use of public transport. We asked for your view on why that may be the case.

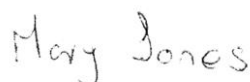
You stated that Swansea has one of the highest take up of bus passes in Wales and expressed some doubt about whether Swansea had the lowest take up. We are aware that the Council is involved in a Quality Bus Partnership with First Cymru that meets quarterly to discuss bus network changes / performance and proposals for improvement. Despite this, you highlighted that the Council has little power to influence local bus companies, and how they provide their services. However, we noted that the Welsh Government is looking at bringing in new legislation that will give local authorities more clout in public transport partnerships.

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter, but would be grateful for confirmation of your response to the public question on street lighting, and would appreciate further information on progress with the delivery of councillors highway schemes. However, we do not require you to respond with a formal letter. An email from yourself in due course will be sufficient on this occasion.

We will then include our letter and any correspondence received in response in the agenda of the next available Committee meeting. We will arrange to follow up on portfolio developments and invite you to a future Committee meeting in due course.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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