



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

**To**  
**Councillor Will Evans**  
Cabinet Member for Anti Poverty

**cc.**  
**Councillor Clive Lloyd**  
Cabinet Member for Transformation &  
Performance

*Please ask for:*  
*Gofynnwch am:* Scrutiny

*Direct Line:* 01792 637256  
*Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail* scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk  
*e-Bost:*

*Our Ref* DI/1  
*Ein Cyf:*

*Your Ref*  
*Eich Cyf:*

*Date* 22 March 2017  
*Dyddiad:*

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Digital Inclusion Scrutiny Working group to the Cabinet Member for Anti Poverty following the meeting of the Working Group on 6 March 2017. It is about the Digital Inclusion Strategy for Swansea Council.

Dear Councillor Evans,

**Digital Inclusion Scrutiny working Group**

I am writing following the scrutiny meeting held on 6 March 2017 to look at the issue of digital inclusion.

Can I first thank you for your attendance at the meeting and that the officers, Sarah Caulkin and Liz Shellard for their report and their answers to our questions. All of your contributions were very much appreciated.

Overall we were pleased to hear that serious attention is being given to this issue given the increasing number of council services being placed online, the importance of ensuring that all citizens are able to access council services when they need them and the need to ensure that as many people as possible have the skills to participate in what is an increasingly digital world.

We were also pleased to hear that progress is being made and that initiatives such as Get Swansea Online are having an impact. We were impressed by the impact demonstrated by the monitoring of these courses.

This is of course a challenging area of work and there is clearly much more that needs to be done. We also happy to hear, therefore, that a review of the digital inclusion strategy is to be conducted shortly. With that in mind we would like to suggest a number of issues that we believe should be addressed as part of that review. In raising these issues we have in mind our experiences as ward councillors and what we know about the needs of our constituents.

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU**

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA / DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE  
GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

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## Issues for the Digital Inclusion Strategy Review

- While we appreciate the need to move people toward digital channels the council should nevertheless ensure that people are able to communicate through non-digital channels where needed
- The language of digital inclusion needs to be carefully considered – the council should not be ‘educating’ or telling people what they must do but rather working with people and offering choices
- The overall levels of digital exclusion need to be captured so that progress can be measured – in particular to understand who is excluded as opposed to those who simply do not need or wish to communicate with the Council
- The needs of different groups should be carefully researched and understood. The strategy should not be based on sweeping generalizations or stereotypes – we support what we heard about the Council doing more to analyse the data that it already holds but suggest that additional sources of information will be needed
- There is a need for a partnership approach given in particular the increasing online services for welfare benefits and health – this should be developed through the Public Services Board
- As well as courses digital skills could be developed more through family and cross generational approaches through schools and community groups – we would like to see this developed
- Language can be an additional barrier for those who do not have either English or Welsh as their first language – we would like to see this issue considered and, in particular, the needs of refugees
- The strategy needs to ensure that those moving to online services are not missing out on advice that they might need. Here we are thinking in particular about the links to financial inclusion and ensuring that advice about financial services and welfare benefits is not being missed because someone is receiving a service online
- The strategy needs to address the legitimate concerns that people have about privacy and security. We believe that there is a degree of public suspicion about what the council does with data it receives on line and a fear of scams. These concerns need to be addressed.
- There is certainly scope to run positive campaigns to encourage people to do more online – we think that such work should be undertaken on a piloted basis aimed at smaller communities or population groups for example

While we do not require a formal reply do this letter we do expect that these issues will be given full consideration as part of the review. With this in mind, and given the importance of this issue, we will be asking that this issue is revisited by scrutiny after the election perhaps as a further working group. In any case we would expect that the issue is raised at the relevant Cabinet Member Question and Answer Sessions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Walton', written in a cursive style.

**COUNCILLOR LESLEY WALTON**

Convener of the Digital Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group

✉ [cllr.lesley.walton@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.lesley.walton@swansea.gov.uk)