



Council – 2 December 2021

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1 Councillors Will Thomas & Myles Langstone

A recent planning application that has been granted to develop the former Oyster Lounge in Mumbles from a bar to flats saw only three properties consulted on the application. This application will have a big impact both during the building period and after construction with enormous strain on the already very limited parking in the area. I feel many more properties should have been informed about this application. Could you please explain how you calculate who should receive a planning notification letter. Would you also consider a review of this.

Please see below the reply on how the calculation for parking provision was made on this application. This might fit nicely into a policy but in the real world living in a fishing village with very little parking this does not (also there is no way the old Oyster Lounge ever generated 45 visitors by car) I would ask the Cabinet Member to kindly review the planning procedures for flats and parking provision (on residential and change of use) as this is clearly not a one size fits all. Would the Cabinet Member please commit to this.

Supporting extract from officer reply:

The Authority's Parking Standards SPG advises that C3 properties should have a minimum of 1 parking space per bedroom for up to a maximum of 3 per property, with an additional space per bedroom above this and 1 visitor space per 5 flats. The development would therefore generate demand for 9 parking spaces for future occupants, with an additional space for visitors, and 10 in total. This can be potentially reduced to one space per flat in highly accessible locations. However as per the SPG the existing social club use creates a demand for 1 commercial space, 1 space per 3 staff and 1 space per 5sqm of public area including servery. The existing useable public area within the club measures approximately 220sqm. This would result in an existing use parking requirement in excess of 45 off street parking spaces, with additional required for a currently unknown number of staff. Furthermore the existing ancillary 3 bedroom residential flat to the second floor generates a demand for at least 1 space, in this accessible location.

Response of the Cabinet Members for Delivery & Operations and Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management

The requirement to publicise planning applications is set out by Welsh Government in Article 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) (Order) 2012. The Council publicises applications in line with this legislation.

In the case of the application referred to, the legislation required the application to be publicised either:

(a) by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates for not less than 21 days; or

(b) by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier.

The Authority not only displayed a site notice but also notified adjoining owner/occupiers. The publicity for the application therefore exceeded the statutory requirement. In addition to this, all planning application are included on the weekly list of applications received and are available to view on the Council website.

In terms of the parking standards SPG, we are currently looking at the City Centre core area. Rather than new SPG, we are looking at applying the existing sustainability criteria to remap the defined city centre core as an area with high accessibility.

Once this is complete we are intending to apply the same rationale to other district centres, which have good active travel, public transport penetration and local services.

In terms of the parking requirements for an existing use, this fallback position is a material consideration and if the Council refuses a planning application on these grounds, Inspectors at appeal will give significant weight to the car parking requirements of an existing use when assessing the car parking requirements and impacts from a proposed use.

2 **Councillors Chris Holley, Mary Jones & Jeff Jones**

We have been informed that death certificates are currently only being issued electronically. Does the Cabinet Member think this is the way this council should be working as some bereaved relatives are finding this process difficult and upsetting. Can he comment why we cannot provide this as a face-to-face service when other service providers can take necessary steps to protect their staff but still meet with the public.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations

Civil Registration is a Statutory role undertaken by the Local Authority via the Superintendent Registrar on behalf of the General Register Office (GRO), therefore direction is taken on how the service operates from the Register General.

Supplementary information on this is provided below.

Following governments measures to manage the Coronavirus outbreak, on the 24th March 2020 Andrew Dent the Deputy Registrar General issued guidance to all English and Welsh Registration services advising of the move away from face to face death registrations for England and Wales.

Swansea Registration Services implemented that change immediately and continue to work in accordance with that guidance.

Exceptions in accordance with our risk assessment will of course be made for any individuals / informants whom are unable to exchange information remotely / electronically or wish to give notice face to face.

Supplementary Information:

The provisions for registering a birth and death are contained in the Birth and Death Registration Act 1953.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 amended the Act to put easements in place for the registration of deaths. An emergency bill was passed through the house of commons 23rd March 2020 and allowed for paper based processes to be carried out electronically. This facilitated the move away from face to face death registrations.

Changes to the Births and Deaths (Electronic communications and electronic storage) order coming into force on the 1st December 2021 will allow for the continuation of associated documentation to be transferred electronically.

This will not only enable the easements contained in the Coronavirus Act 2020, in relation to the electronic transmission of documents for death registrations, to continue but it will also extend the provision to include births and still-births in the future.

These measures will see a change from the traditional face to face Civil Registration processes, which might not have changed if it wasn't for the Covid Pandemic but as stated above exceptions will be made should the request be made.

It is understood that there may be some informants that may be upset from the lack of face to face contact but our experience is that in the majority of cases avoiding face to face contact whilst exchanging extremely upsetting information is very much preferred.

Apart from the health protection benefits to staff and the general public from less face to face interaction due to Covid, there are business / service benefits from the quicker transfer of information electronically, allowing for more registrations to be undertaken on a daily basis. This does reflect a general direction of travel by the GRO towards a digital first model for registrations.

3 Councillors Cyril Anderson, Bev Hopkins, Mike Lewis & June Burtonshaw

In the light of a number of alarming media stories about drink spiking and other forms of violence and abuse in Swansea and across the UK, can the Cabinet Member outline the work which is being done by the Council and in partnership with others to keep residents safe.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities

The council departments are working with other agencies and South Wales Police as well as a co-ordinated response through the Safer Swansea Partnership and the Evening and Night Time Economy groups.

Some of the key areas of work include:

- Establishment of weekly engagement sessions at the three main city centre student accommodations (Roost, Coppergate and Fusion). These sessions are also attended by Community Safety officers, South Wales Police and University Liaison staff.
- Spiking is discussed at the multi partnership Evening & Night Time Economy meetings (ENTE). Local businesses alongside Police, Local authority services (licensing, trading standards, community safety), health are in attendance along with other stakeholders

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swansea Bay University Health Board collating information and producing a report on the local spiking picture – numbers, admissions, welfare advice and support. • Spike awareness posters are being delivered to all ENTE venues and Universities (accommodation & campus). • Swansea licensees meeting is agreeing upon a coordinated approach from all of our ENTE venues. • Attendance by team members and Presentation at recent student meetings as part of a broader discussion on safety matters. • Promotion of White Ribbon day throughout Swansea. • Work is ongoing to target night time economy staff for increased awareness raising and training on all forms of Violence against Women, domestic abuse and sexual violence and identifying predatory behaviours in bars and clubs. A Safer Swansea partnership bid was submitted in September to secure funds for a large scale training rollout for bar and door staff, additional policing and working towards developing 'Safe Spaces' for anyone feeling vulnerable or that they have been a victim of spiking or other forms of harassment or abuse. The 'Ask for Angela' campaign is also being considered where bars and clubs display a poster encouraging people to 'Ask for Angela' if they have any concerns about their safety while at a bar, club or restaurant.
4	<p>Councillors Will Thomas & Linda Tyler-Lloyd</p> <p>At the last meeting of full council the leader announced additional funding for skate parks in Swansea. What if any of these funds are going to be made available towards the Mumbles MCC skate park project.</p> <p>Response of the Leader/ Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>The additional funding has been made available to improve the Council's skate facilities across the city/county and potentially provide new facilities in areas of high demand, not adequately served. There are no plans to use the funding to resource existing projects or facilities led by third parties including Community Councils, or which are assumed to already be resourced.</p>
5	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Kevin Griffiths & Chris Holley</p> <p>Does the Leader support the view that reusing existing buildings has a key role to play in making our built environment greener and more sustainable.</p> <p>Does he also consider that demolition can be a wasteful and often unnecessary process. If so, should the Council be playing a more active role in encouraging the repurposing of existing buildings rather than countenancing total demolition.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>The regeneration & development process is complex and site specific. In some cases, for development viability reasons, it makes sense to demolish redundant buildings and rebuild with new, modern structures, that are functional and energy efficient, and which meet the needs of future occupiers and investors. However, in other situations, the reuse of an existing building is far more appropriate, depending on the context and planning restrictions that may apply. We recognise that each regeneration project is therefore unique, and the case for demolition, or retention & reuse, or in some cases a mix of both, is subject to a detailed assessment of the</p>

	<p>various constraints, aspirations and viability. The Council considers all of these issues when identifying potential regeneration scenarios to find the optimum solution that maximises the economic, social and environmental well-being of Swansea.</p>
6	<p>Councillors Peter Black, Mike Day & Graham Thomas</p> <p>What is the council's attitude to electronic and online petitions.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations</p> <p>Section 42 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on each principal Council to publish a Petitions Scheme setting out how the Council intends to handle and respond to Petitions and ePetitions. This duty will be enacted in May 2022 following the Local Government Elections on 5 May 2022.</p> <p>The Head of Democratic Services is actively working with other Authorities throughout Wales in relation to the parameters of a Petitions Scheme and a report will be presented to Council in due course. The software allowing the Authority to carry out ePetitions is scheduled for installation in December 2021.</p> <p>In specific response to the question, the Council is in favour of public participation and engagement and supportive of the legislative requirement.</p>
7	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Gareth Sullivan & Cheryl Philpott</p> <p>The LDP acknowledges that Green Wedges are required to safeguard the openness of land and to prevent settlement coalescence. Nonetheless, some Green Wedges have been reconfigured and reduced in order to accommodate large scale housing developments which are also being widely constructed in other Greenfield locations. Given the appalling state of biodiversity within the UK, which is in the bottom 10% globally and the lowest of all the G7 group of countries, does the Cabinet Member consider that an urgent rethink should be carried out to ensure that the perceived housing need is met by building only on Brownfield sites rather than destroying more of our Greenfield legacy.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations</p> <p>The adopted Swansea LDP incorporates a growth strategy that seeks to maximise development on the County's available brownfield land, where such sites are viable. It also acknowledges that a significant element of future growth will need to be delivered on greenfield sites having regard to the evidence that illustrates a deficit of suitable previously developed land. There are a range of detailed LDP policies that ensure development on greenfield sites is carried out in a sustainable manner, with an emphasis on maximising the retention of greenspace, in order to meet key Council objectives relating to biodiversity, climate change and health and wellbeing. The Council has also adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) that provide further detail on how planning applications will be determined having regard to the need to maintain and enhance biodiversity, and deliver sustainable healthy places in accordance with placemaking principles.</p> <p>LDP Policy ER 3 'Green Wedges' identifies the land that meets the policy objectives set out in PPW (section 3), namely to maintain openness and provide a buffer between the settlement edge and statutory designations, and to safeguard important views. The identification of ecological or community value lies outside the scope of Policy ER3 designations. The Green Wedges identified in the LDP were formulated</p>

	<p>as part of the statutory LDP preparation process, with regard to the associated supporting evidence and stakeholder consultation. All relevant assessment documents and consultation reports are available on the planning web pages of the Council's website. The process carried out to define the Green Wedge boundaries for the LDP included a review of land previously designated as green wedge in the now superseded UDP. In a number of cases, it was concluded that UDP green wedges were not serving the required policy objectives and were therefore removed to ensure the designations complied with national policy.</p> <p>A review of the LDP growth strategy, including housing requirements and associated available land supply will be carried out as part of the Statutory Plan Review process. This would also include, where appropriate, a review of Green wedge designations.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Councillors Mike Day, Jeff Jones & Cheryl Philpott</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member tell Council the reason for the barriers being placed across the cycle paths on Mayals Road. Can he tell us when the paths on Mayals Road will be fully operational.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management</p> <p>Weather permitting, work to construct the new Active Travel route along Mayals Road will be completed by the end of November. The final element of work will involve the provision of new road markings which are subject to dry weather. The barriers that are currently installed on site will be removed once the works are complete.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Councillors Mike Day, Cheryl Philpott & Mary Jones</p> <p>We welcome the consultation on the extension of the Shared Use Paths and providing drop-in sessions. Can the Cabinet Member tell Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. In addition to the website and media releases, was a leaflet drop to residents organised. b. If so, what streets were included. <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management</p> <p>I assume the question is referring to the consultation exercise associated with the revised Integrated Network Map (INM), rather than the specific community engagement associated with the delivery of one of the number of Active Travel schemes being developed this year. The INM covers the entire authority and as such it would not be feasible to letter drop every resident. Extensive effort has been made to ensure that all members of the community are provided with opportunity to be part of the consultation process for the new network map. This has included consultation via the options listed below:</p>

- Commonplace early engagement with the general public 22nd February to 9th April 2021, accompanied by bi-lingual social media and radio campaign to promote and signpost people to provide their views on walking and cycling in Swansea.
- Early stakeholder workshop held on 14th April 2021, with attendees from a wide and diverse range of groups / organisations. This session was followed by a number of individual meetings and communications with groups / organisations who attended.
- Formal public consultation launched 23rd August 2021 via the Swansea Council website, with draft ATNM and information on the consultation.
- An email and briefing note summarising the project was sent to stakeholder groups, community groups and ward members.
- An email inviting these groups to join a webinar / online presentation (2 dates offered – 19th October and 2nd November 2021) was sent, along with a specific offer that the project team would cater for any particular requirements.
- As part of the consultation, 5 face-to-face engagement sessions were scheduled strategically across Swansea, to allow ease of access to local venues in October and November. These sessions were organised to allow members of the public to discuss plans in further detail and gave opportunity to members of the public who may not be able to view maps online to discuss plans in person. Venues included; Mumbles (Ostreime Centre), City Centre (Civic Centre Central Library), Clydach (Forge Fach Community Centre), Gorseinon Library and Penlan Leisure Centre. All venues had disabled access.
- A bi-lingual video was posted on the consultation webpage, with audio content, explaining the ATNM process and outlining the consultation process. This approach was welcomed by access groups, and also served to provide an alternative for those not wishing to physically attend the face-to-face sessions in light of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic.
- The project team has engaged with representatives from 'Vision Impaired West Glamorgan', Guide Dogs Cymru and Sight Life Wales to determine the best means of engaging visually impaired users.
- On 28th October we will be gave a verbal presentation to the County Steering Group chaired by Vision Impaired West Glamorgan and attended by a number of disability and access organisations / groups, to discuss the ATNM process and gain feedback from their Members.
- To engage young people we have reached out to all schools in Swansea and in November will be delivering lessons to Y6-9 year groups around active travel and barriers to walking and cycling. We have also provided lesson plans to a number of schools within Swansea that will deliver sessions and provide feedback to the project team for review with the draft ATNM.
- Hands-up Surveys will also be sent to schools in Swansea for additional data on modes of travel in schools we are unable to visit and deliver sessions to.
- A further dedicated session is planned with Higher Education establishments in Swansea on the 9th November 2021, following their participation in wider stakeholder workshops.
- A range of social media posts to advertise the consultation have taken place throughout the consultation to both advertise the online survey and the face to face sessions
- Leaflet drops have been conducted to a range of businesses in the city Centre and surrounding retail parks.
- Mailchimp newsletters have been sent to both Swansea Bayways news subscribers and to news subscribers of the previous commonplace engagement page to encourage participation in the formal consultation.

The approach to community engagement when delivering specific projects following the completion of the INM stakeholder process is dictated by a number of factors; to include location, catchment, user groups and recent restrictions around covid measures. The team has used letter drops, website updates, local press and social media notices in attempt to be as inclusive as possible. The design teams have also worked closely with the respective ward members and invited suggestion as to how best to engage with the communities in which the works are being developed.

10 **Councillor Lynda James, Jeff Jones & Susan Jones**

There appears to be difficulty in recruiting staff especially in Highways and Social Care currently. Will the Cabinet Members inform Council as to why they think there is this problem and what steps are being taken to improve the situation.

Response of the Cabinet Members for Delivery & Operations

Highways & Transportation:

The construction and engineering industry is currently challenged due to a large increase in projects being delivered both within the region and across the UK.

Increased market rates and the limited pool of talent within the market place exacerbate the situation, with some local authorities offering market supplements to try and compete for applicants. An example of the challenge is that the service recently went out to advert for technical posts within the Capital projects Team. Five posts were advertised and only two applications were received. One of which was from an individual wanting to work remotely from another part of the UK and the other was from an individual without the required level of experience.

This type of issue has been raised nationally at County Surveyors Society (CSS Wales) meetings and is posing a challenge for the majority of authorities and consultancy's in Wales. It is widely recognised that this is a challenge across the sector.

The authority has sought to address this growing issue by developing a regional higher apprenticeship skills programme. This is already proving a huge success, but will take time for new trained individuals to achieve the desired level of experience required. In addition to this the Place Directorate is submitting a bid to the Economic Recovery Fund to establish training posts for a three to four year period to help tackle the longer term shortage of skills.

Longer term construction programmes such as Swansea Central and the Active Travel programme are providing continuity of funding and will support the development of new skills within the region.

To note there is also the Talent and Skills Forum recently established as part of the City Deal which will hopefully support Swansea in finding recruitment solutions.

Whilst officers are continuing to exploring more creative ways to get individuals on board, we envisage that appointment and retention will remain challenging for the foreseeable future.

Social Services

Child and Family Services

Whilst there has always been challenges within front line Child Protection Social Work Teams, within the Authority, it is evident that the global pandemic has impacted further on our ability to maintain a stable workforce who are responsible for case managing our most high risk and complex cases in the service.

There have been significant issues in recruitment and retention in this specific area, this has included Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW) leaving the Authority to work for agencies for a considerably higher rate of pay (one of which had only been with the Authority for 6 weeks). Agencies are currently paying NQSW in excess of £30 per hour and more qualified Social Workers between £36 and £40 per hour which is a far higher rate than would have been offered pre-Covid. This is in the face of a national lack of Social Workers in frontline child protection teams. The vacancy rates in the three area social work teams is currently 30%, with this increasing by the end of the calendar year.

Staffing is now at a critical point in the area teams, and despite consistent attempts to recruit. A recent social worker advertisement attracted only 2 candidates, one was shortlisted and appointable in interview but subsequently declined the job offer (remaining in an alternative agency job). A recent senior social worker advertisement attracted no candidates

A range of solutions are being implemented over the immediate, short and medium term to alleviate the pressures in the frontline area social work teams, offers of incentives to retain and attract social work staff and provide assurances that statutory duties and regulatory requirements can be met.

Adult Services

The staffing pressures within Adult Services, as a result of the pandemic, are predominantly in Service Provision within Residential Care and Home Care.

Recruitment Drive

- 3 recruitment drives for both residential services and homecare has resulted in bolstering our workforce considerably during the pandemic. The campaigns have attracted an additional 122 front line staff.

Regional Proposal

- Across the West Glamorgan region all externally commissioned domiciliary care and supported living Providers have received an in year 10% uplift to fee rates, specifically to help resolve workforce pressures. This increase has been awarded from the beginning of October 2021 and will help to stabilise services by improving rates of pay and reducing workforce leaving care work for employment in other sectors. This increase has been paid to Providers on the basis that it must be used to increase rates of pay to at least Real Living Wage levels for all workers. This takes rates of pay to a minimum of £9.90 per hour. The precise arrangements and rates of pay has been left to individual agencies to determine given their different cost structures. Following the 10% most agencies are now paying rates which are higher than £9.90 per hour.
- Achieving a standardised uplift across the region removes problems where providers are working across borders. Further increases may be necessary in April 2022 to maintain parity with RLW and likely inflationary pressures.
- A joint recruitment campaign has commenced, led by the Health Board, to support all partners within the region, Health Board, Neath/Port Talbot and Swansea Council with the on-going problems associated with staffing in the

sector. The aim of the campaign is to recruit care workers via the Health Board and then second the individual to an authority of their choice, for 6 months, to be part of the Homecare Team.

National Work

- A national project has been developed to promote recruitment in to the Care Sector called WeCare Wales, the project lead is Social Care Wales. The WeCare web site has information about the range of job roles across the sector and videos of “real people” speaking about their jobs. This is an additional resource for Social Services to advertise and promote their vacancies.

11 Councillors Lynda James, Susan Jones & Kevin Griffiths

Will the Cabinet Member tell Council how many bikes were first purchased with the cycle hire scheme:-

- (a) how many have been purchased since that time, and at what cost and
- (b) how many bikes are there;
- (c) what is the usage rate.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management

The Santander bike share scheme in Swansea, is managed and operated by Swansea University. Initially the scheme operated with 50 bikes across the network.

Since the initial launch of the scheme, 20 more bikes have been added to the scheme, to total 70 bikes available across 6 stations. As the scheme is operated by Swansea University in collaboration with Santander and Next Bike, cost figures for purchasing additional bikes are currently unavailable.

The usage rates can be seen in the below graph showing rentals per month. There has been a significant growth in rentals per month in 2020 in comparison with initial 2018 levels of hire. Average rentals per month in 2020 (1,956) were 59% higher than average rentals per month in 2018 (1,189) and January 2021 saw a 155% growth in rentals compared to January 2020. The service was temporarily unavailable during early to mid-2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic.

