

**Providing Council with Written Responses to Questions asked at Council
4 November 2021**

1	<p>Mr Neil Jones</p> <p>Minute 64 - Public Questions</p> <p>Asked a question in relation to Minute 69 “Amendment to Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) of the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) and Funding & Investment Performance Update, and Climate Change Risk Update”.</p> <p>"Climate Change Risk "Swansea Council declared a "climate emergency" in 2019 and have set in motion a strategy to move towards Zero Carbon in a timely manner, 2030 in the case of its corporate estate.</p> <p>Regrettably no similar progress has been made by the Pension Fund Committee, although over the last three years they have reduced their exposure to dangerous fossil fuel investments by nearly 50%.</p> <p>The Chairman Councillor Clive Lloyd has told me investment in fossil fuels is unsustainable in the long term, and financial advisers, including some of the counties own, have indicated fossil fuel companies, like Shell and BP still have no investment strategy compatible with 1.5 degrees as agreed in Paris 6 years.</p> <p>What more evidence do they want that "engagement" is not working. If not now, when.</p> <p>With COP26 debating these issues at the moment, how much longer do we have to wait before Council and its Pension Fund Funds Committee commits to fossil fuel divestment and develop strategy for reaching zero carbon in a timely manner in order to protect the future of the planet and the financial security of pension fund members.</p> <p>Response of the Chair of the Pension Fund Committee</p> <p>The Pension Fund Committee as the appropriately delegated Council committee with responsibility for the proper governance of The City & County of Swansea Pension Fund takes its fiduciary and its sustainable investment responsibilities very, very seriously. As such it has made great strides in achieving its published ambitions in reducing the carbon emissions of its listed equity portfolios by 50% by 2022 and is well ahead of schedule, with latest reported metrics showing carbon emission exposures being at only 42% (reduced by 58%). Let me remind you that it is all carbon emissions and not those solely associated with fossil fuels (25%) which adversely contribute to climate change and The Committee has taken steps to address this risk holistically and not just divestment from fossil fuels as continually advocated by FoE.</p> <p>As previously advised this is a constant evolving landscape. Noting the good progress, The Pension Fund Committee has historically, at its meeting on the 17th Nov 2021 approved a recommendation to approve setting a <u>'net zero' carbon emissions target of 2037</u> for the investment portfolio of the fund and the accompanying investment beliefs and the resultant outline framework to achieve that aim. It is a highly ambitious</p>
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target noting the varied obligations of the fund and its objectives, however the committee has undertaken a rigorous education programme and workshop to develop and adopt this approach.

It is obvious that the course chosen by the Pension Fund committee to address climate change risk does not satisfy the demands of FoE in terms of pace and methodology. However, the Committee are satisfied that this measured, incremental, evidence based approach is not only effective in achieving its aims but is well in advance of our peers in the rest of the LGPS and pension fund space. You refer to the record breaking investment return achieved by the fund this year and this is because we have a well-diversified appropriately risk aware investment portfolio. In fact this sensible approach to sustainable investing was recognised by an LAPF award in 2019 and the fund is currently shortlisted for **3 LAPF Awards in 2021**: Best Pension Fund, **Best Climate Change Strategy**, Best Investment Innovation.

The Pension Fund Committee are unanimous in their recognition of the risks posed by climate change not only to the fund and its members but to us all at large. The Pension Fund Committee is clear in its remit and area of responsibility but expecting The City & County of Swansea Pension Fund to deliver climate change-preparedness at listed companies is not realistic. That is the case not least because the Office for National Statistics analysis of the ownership of the £1.88 trillion value of UK quoted companies reveals that pension funds own only 2.4% of all shares of which the LGPS is less than that. This compares to 4% owned by insurance companies and 13.5% owned by individuals – and nearly 55% ownership by foreign investors but we recognise that the LGPS can start to deploy their assets in a more climate aware way, which the City & County of Swansea Pension Fund have embraced and continue to make progress in. There is definitely an air of preaching to the converted in respect of our continued correspondence on this matter and perhaps the work of The FoE may well be better directed at some of the other less sophisticated pension funds and asset owners identified elsewhere.

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Councillor C A Holley

In relation to Minute 73 - Councillors Questions - Question 2

He referred to the Facebook page claiming that children living at Dan-y Coed were not receiving the Care & Education they require. He asked what actions were taken as a result of this.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Children Services

In response to the additional question, Item 15, Question 2, point (i) raised following Council on the 4th November, neither the Head of Child and Family Services or myself have had sight of the Facebook page nor has it been shared with myself or the Head of Service; on this basis I am unable to add anything further to the response that has already been provided.

As a result of the complaints raised, Orbis were contacted who confirmed they had responded directly to the residents about their concerns and provided information about why the children were spending more time on

	<p>site than usual (due to Covid restrictions) and the measures they were putting place to try and minimise the noise levels.</p>
3	<p>Councillor M H Jones</p> <p>In relation to Minute 73 - Councillors Questions - Question 2 She referred to the Improvement Plan in place and asked whether the Cabinet Member was happy with the Plan, and whether he felt the Council were receiving value for money.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Children Services</p> <p>Care Inspectorate Wales will have oversight of the improvement plan that is in place following the last inspection at Dan-y-Coed. Child and Family Services will continue with routine visits to the residential home, as they would for any commissioned service.</p> <p>The Head of Child and Family Services has confirmed that the social worker for the young person from Swansea who is living at Dan-y-Coed, along with the Independent Reviewing Officer who undertakes the young person's statutory looked after reviews, are content with the care and support being provided to them.</p>
4	<p>Councillor A M Day</p> <p>In relation to Minute 73 - Councillors Questions - Question 3 Asked when the report would be available.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Delivery & Operations</p> <p>We have only recently received the full conservation study and officers are currently reviewing to understand if it provides all the necessary information required. We will also need to consider the full cost of conservation of the protected buildings. Once final analysis has been undertaken we can look to share for information.</p>