



Council – 3 November 2022

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1	<p>Councillors Rebecca Fogarty, Sara Keeton, Mike Lewis, Wendy Lewis & Lesley Walton</p> <p>In light of recent decisions by the UK government, we are having to prepare for major pressures on local authority spending, and with it major impacts on the well-being of our population. In light of the benefits to physical and mental well-being of people, young and old, can the Cabinet Member reassure us that the £1 million previously pledged for skate and other wheeled sports sites in Swansea remains committed to these valuable facilities.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism</p> <p>Cabinet agreed on 20/01/22 an allocation of £2.05m of the Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) for the purpose of enhanced play and skate park facilities.</p> <p>Within this, £500k was earmarked to be allocated to enhance skate facilities. To formalise this allocation and ensure its use fulfils the intentions, a proposal has been put to the ERF board for a strategic approach. This approach has been informed by a review of existing facilities and an options appraisal to ensure the greatest impact possible within the available finances.</p> <p>The proposal and options will be considered and shared in coming weeks.</p>
2	<p>Councillors Mike Lewis, Wendy Lewis Lesley Walton, Sara Keeton & Rebecca Fogarty</p> <p>What play areas will be upgraded in the next 4 months and how many have been upgraded to date since the programme started.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism Councillors Mike Lewis, Wendy Lewis Lesley Walton, Sara Keeton & Rebecca Fogarty</p> <p>What play areas will be upgraded in the next 4 months and how many have been upgraded to date since the programme started.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration and Tourism</p> <p>The initial programme upgraded 42 playgrounds, detail of which can be found on the Council website here: https://swansea.gov.uk/newplaygrounds</p> <p>The following playgrounds will either have been upgraded or will be in the process of being upgraded in the next 4 months, as part of the second stage programme.</p>

- Hafod Park
- Heol Tir Du
- Denver Road
- Brooksby Road
- Ynystawe Park
- Dunvant Park
- Dunvant Meadow
- Swansea Point
- Bonymaen Park (safety surfacing)
- Maesteg Park
- Ynysnewydd playground
- Garnswllt

This programme is addressing the remainder of the Council's playgrounds that are considered as a red/amber status in accordance with the RAG Condition list. The RAG list has been collated in accordance with inspection reports, to ensure the facilities remain safe for use, with consideration given to planned and preventive maintenance.

3 Councillors Peter Black, Chris Holley & Mary Jones

Can the Cabinet Member provide an update on the future of the NEAT Teams.

Responses of the Cabinet Members for Care Services & Community (Services)

The NEAT Teams continue to be one of the Day Opportunity options for individuals with a Care and Support plan via Social Services to achieve their identified outcomes.

The NEAT teams now work alongside the Cleansing Ward Operative Teams as extra resource so Member requests via the CWOT route already publicised by Cleansing also involves the NEAT teams, therefore a single point of contact for ward requests.

4 Councillors Will Thomas, Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor

Has the council ever considered a designated social worker in each school. I'm concerned about the resources of school staff who are primarily educators to sufficiently be able to address the issues. Also, there is a need for the correct skills and expertise in identifying signs of abuse.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

The approach we have taken in Swansea is for our early help staff to spend time in schools on a regular basis offering consultations and advice. This builds on our vision to prevent the need for statutory intervention by discussing with school staff any worries or concerns they may have about individual children. Our continuum of need is felt to be very helpful, particularly by schools, in helping to understand when a referral may be needed to Social Services or when it may be more appropriate for early help services to support children, young people and their families. In addition to this, we hold multi-agency locality meetings involving schools and other local partners offering advice and assistance on specific themes, for example how to support parents to understand neurodiversity and what this may mean for their child.

5	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Jeff Jones & Lynda James</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member/ Leader confirm that the management of the Grand Theatre is viable and working well under the current management system and what are the plans for its future.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Culture & Equalities</p> <p>The commercial landscape for arts and culture has been significantly affected by events over recent years and whilst some signs of recovery are evident nationally, it is clear that this is not happening in across all sectors nor at the same rates. Swansea Grand Theatre has shown agility in assessing the market and securing product best placed to satisfy the current demand. Together with its partners it is delivering a high-quality service and a full programme of events in challenging economic times. The past few months have seen audience confidence in public gatherings increase, but the pressures on our customer's own finances remain a concern for the leisure industry. Despite the national pressures, the current management structure is working very well, energy levels and morale within the organisation are high and the intention is to build on this and current partnerships to maintain our viability for the future.</p>
6	<p>Councillors Sam Pritchard, Jess Pritchard, Mike Lewis, Wendy Lewis & Lesley Walton</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member give an update on the roll out of local ward operatives.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>The Cleansing Ward Operative Programme has been running since mid-September. Enhanced cleansing works are over and above routine operations to deal with more intensive works such as but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove detritus (soil/leaves) built up at build outs, pedestrian islands, crossing points, bus shelters etc. • Remove excessive weed growth which won't blow away after spraying • Clearance of trapped litter • Cut back where ownership of land cannot be established or is not part of the Parks work programmes. • Deep clean in areas of leaf fall • Clear fly tipping from land in unknown ownership if visible from public areas <p>The way in which you direct these works is via an online form that can be found at this link: https://forms.office.com/r/sj6qrw0vQY</p> <p>Any queries relating to the programme detail and appropriate works can be put to the Operational Area Manager on cwot@swansea.gov.uk</p>
7	<p>Councillors Jess Pritchard, Lesley Walton, Wendy Lewis, Sam Pritchard, Mike White & Beverley Hopkins</p> <p>Can the Leader give an update on progress with the delivery of the river corridor master plan, specifically, progress with the delivery of the skyline development and Penderyn distillery and visitor centre.</p>

Response of the Leader

Wider Site Masterplan

Round 2 Levelling Up Fund Bid submitted, and outcome awaited, expected later this year. The council is waiting for formal notification of the delay from UK Government as it was originally expected to be announced in the Autumn.

The Bid targets regeneration the River Tawe corridor, consolidating heritage structures to complement the works done to date. The bid will target regeneration of the laboratory building, canal bridges on the Morfa distribution road elevation, the V&S locomotive shed, further development to the already secured Musgrave Engine House and Vivian Engine House, all listed structures and the Musgrave Engine House a Scheduled Ancient Monument for future generations. The laboratory building has been secured for safety and to prevent loss of original fabric (fully shrouded in scaffolding), awaiting funding to progress to redevelopment. Our strategic development partner, Urban Splash, have been working up a scheme at St Thomas and are currently reviewing the wider Hafod Copperworks site, as part of the Tawe Riverside Corridor redevelopment.

Skyline

The Council have a provisional agreement with Skyline to enable the development of a luge and cable car leisure destination at Kilvey Hill, and are in the process of site assembly.

Skyline have an ambitious programme, site investigations and geotechnical studies are planned for next month. Subject to approvals they are targeting a 2025 opening

Pontoons

Full planning and LBC consent has been approved. Tender evaluation for the supply and installation of the pontoon is currently live. Lease discussions progressing with the Badminton Estate between legal representatives. Method statement for the trial excavations of the quayside are being prepared by DLO for submission to planning for discharge consideration. Delivery expected Jan-Mar 2023. This will provide the potential to run river taxis and other transport on the river

Powerhouse Redevelopment (Penderyn Distillery)

The Council is responsible to provide a redeveloped Powerhouse building, a new build visitor centre, walkway and 25% separation of the museum store to a shell and core standard which will be leased to Penderyn Whisky funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund and Welsh Government, and council match funding. The main contractors are due to complete in November 2022. Penderyn will undertake their fit out and are targeting a 1st March 2023 opening (St David's Day). Penderyn Whisky lead and manage their own fit out works but will work closely with Swansea Council to assist in progressing their project.

In turn, Welsh Government funding has supported the shell and core redevelopment of the Porters Lodge and Weighbridge Office under the same build contract, further consolidating heritage structures. End tenants are to be sought.

8 Councillors Will Thomas, Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor

What is the council's strategy to address placement shortages for looked-after children and to ensure appropriateness of support for carers and placements.

	<p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Care Services</p> <p>We remain committed to our vision to support children and young people to remain living with their family, or wider family, where it is safe to do so. When children need to be looked after by the local authority (for a short time or for a longer period) we recognise that it is important for them to live in Swansea. Our ambitions are to recruit more foster carers in support of national approach to local authority fostering through Foster Wales. We have strengthened our fostering team and the support available to foster carers by creating a therapeutic fostering hub to help with placement stability and being able to better understand and meet the needs of children and young people who may have more complex needs. We are expanding our in-house residential children’s homes and hope to have more local homes run by the local authority over the next 12-18 months. We have also reshaped our internal therapy service so that they can offer a wider range of interventions and help to all of the people who care for our looked after children. We feel this is key to creating the right offer of support for our carers, and more importantly to ensuring children and young people are living in the right place from the first point that they become looked after.</p>
9	<p>Councillors Wendy Lewis, Mike White, Beverley Hopkins, Paul Lloyd & Mike Lewis</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member give an update on plans to light the bay from Mumbles to the Civic Centre.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>In light of the significant financial pressures facing the Council, all ERF (Economic Recovery Fund) projects have been reviewed by Officers and Cabinet Members. The lighting of the promenade will proceed and Officers have been instructed accordingly.</p> <p>The lead in time for delivery of the lighting bollards is approximately 10 weeks and work will commence as soon as possible after their receipt.</p>
10	<p>Councillors Will Thomas, Francesca O’Brien & Angela O’Connor</p> <p>What are the councils plans to support local businesses in Mumbles during the work which will be carried out on the wall sea defence.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Environment & Infrastructure and Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>The significant works are required to safeguard the community from coastal flooding, but have been designed in a manner that limits disruption through considered phasing and construction, including the provision of offsite fabrication of key elements. It is proposed that works to provide alternative parking provision along Mumbles Road are implemented at the outset of the scheme, so as to free up construction space for ease of delivery, but also afford alternative provision that will limit the impact to local businesses. Alternative boat storage has also been identified for the duration of the works, with permanent slipway access maintained. A community liaison officer is to be employed by the contractor to help link up with local business operators to ensure that opportunities to support traders throughout this disruptive period are managed appropriately. Whilst sections of the promenade will have to be closed for periods of the work, the Contraction methodology will ensure</p>

	<p>that alternative provision is maintain. Regular briefings and updates to the community will be provided to help mitigate disruption.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Councillors Will Thomas, Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor</p> <p>Would the council consider doing short term let's on the Langland Bay huts, which seem to have been under used this season and many unsuccessful on their bids.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>2022/23 saw significant demand for beach huts with over 1,000 applications against 80 beach huts available to let under a licence agreement, for periods of 10; 3 and 4 months. We have also introduced winter lets, again achieving 100% occupancy. Allocation is made via a 'ballot', and demand is such that applications continue year-round, outside of the published period. 122 licences have now been issued, through this fair and equitable process, which also enables a regular 'turnover' of keyholders.</p> <p>Whilst some unsuccessful applicants may perceive the huts as underused or empty, the process is fair and open to all on the same terms and we cannot dictate how often and when the facilities are used once the licenses are issued and fees have been collected. Staff regularly attend the site for maintenance and supervision of the foreshore, and feedback suggest that different times do show considerable and widespread use of all huts at varying times of day/ season.</p> <p>It may be possible to explore short term rentals i.e. week or day, but evidence suggests that the offer suits customer demands/preferences. Shorter periods would require greater intervention and resources by staff in terms of processing payments; key handovers; cleaning; regulatory checks etc. which wouldn't be offset by higher usage/ fees, and may also be affected by day to day customer choice based on uncontrollable factors such as holidays/ weather/ other events in the city. At present the model is working well and allows financial forecasting that enables planned maintenance and improvements on a rolling programme.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Councillors Mike Lewis, Andrew Williams, Beverley Hopkins, Mike White & Wendy Lewis</p> <p>Can the Leader highlight the impacts of the U.K. government mini budget on borrow rates. Can he also confirm if the current energy help provides any assistance to this council with energy costs.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>The impact on interest rates has been chaotic for the whole country and disastrous for anyone borrowing money, for the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for the devolved administrations, for councils, to business, to homeowners, to residents. It is likely to get worse and unusually I have to place caveat on my answer, in that much could have changed between the time it was written and the date of the meeting, such is the chaos caused by the Conservative U.K. Government</p> <p>I think the Bank of England letter to the Treasury Select Committee says it all (see attached letter). It's a technical letter but the first diagram shows the clear chaos that ensued in immediately after the mini budget - which is now - nano budget, with most of it dismantled, reversed or swept away by the 4th Tory chancellor in 4 months, but</p>

	<p>still leaving a £30 billion black hole to be dealt with in the forthcoming ultra scary Halloween budget on the 31st October.</p> <p>For this Council, long term borrowing rates still remain significantly higher than before the disastrous Tory mini budget.</p> <p>I would remind members that we locked in fixed borrowing at below 2% for up 50 years on the clear advice of the S151 officer. Rates are even now, after all the stabilisation taken by the Bank of England to date, around 5%. Some 2.5 times the level we were able to borrow at! Whilst the Council is protected on borrowing already done, new and sometimes unavoidable borrowing will now be very much more expensive directly because of disastrous decisions made by the Tories in London.</p> <p>The current energy cap on wholesale energy costs far exceeds the cost of already pre purchased energy by this Council. The current cap is worth absolutely nothing! Our forward purchasing come <u>1 April</u> looks truly dreadful, just at the point in time when the currently already worthless cap is now due to be scrapped with a new review announced - despite promises made by the PM (assuming she is the PM). No wonder the UK government chose April Fools day!</p>
13	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Lynda James & Graham Thomas</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member explain to Members why comments from the public on planning applications are no longer shown on the Council’s Planning Portal.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>The Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Wales Order 2012 requires the Local Planning Authority to keep a register of planning applications and sets out the requirements of the register, which may be kept electronically and available for inspection on a website. The register has to include the planning application, submitted plans and supporting documents and the decision notices together with any associated legal agreements. There is no legal requirement for responses to consultations to be part of the register.</p> <p>Whilst comments from the public have been published, it is evident that by publishing these comment the Council is at risk of breaching the Data Protection Act. Following investigation of a suspected breach, legal advice was given to officers that they should cease from publishing responses from the public as a breach of the Data Protection Act could see the Council face substantial fines.</p>
14	<p>Councillors Lyndon Jones & Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member confirm how many Ash Trees have been felled on land owned by the Council and are there any plans to plant new trees to replace them.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>The Tree Services Unit of the Parks Service area have felled 1395 ash trees on Council land since 2019, over the same period they have planted 1164 large trees.</p> <p>It is not the intention of the service to replant in woodlands, wooded swathes or copses where natural regeneration will outgrow and out-compete with any replanting carried out. Where larger numbers have been removed from parks such as Morriston</p>

	<p>or Singleton (as well as others), the Parks service has planted several trees to each ash lost but the emphasis is not on the numbers rather planting the right species in the right place with the best chance of survival to maturity.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
15	<p>Councillors Michael Locke, Kevin Griffiths & Susan Jones</p> <p>The coin change machines at the Public Toilets at the Swansea Bus Station have been out of action for several months. Is it the council's intention to repair or replace these machines. Also has the council considered contactless payments at these toilets.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>The change machines at the public toilets in Swansea Bus Station are working correctly. Both machines are filled on a Monday and Friday morning but are emptied that day by people using the machines. They are replenished each day through the week from change taken in the toilets. However there is not enough collected each day to fill the machine as they are not only used by customers using the toilets but also by bus and taxi drivers who require change.</p> <p>The Council has previously explored installing contactless card readers on the toilet barriers, however, at the time the equipment cost was not covered by the income from usage so decided not to proceed. Officers will market test options available to see if it is now more financially viable.</p>
16	<p>Councillors Michael Locke, Cheryl Philpott & Mark Tribe</p> <p>The new Swansea Bus Shelters do not have timetables or any indication of when the next bus is due. Is it the Council's intention to display bus timetables at these new bus shelters.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>I can advise that bus operators, themselves, are obliged to provide roadside information for passengers. Officers have alerted First Cymru, South Wales Transport and Adventure Travel who each have publicity teams handling timetable installation. As and when required, the transport team relays passenger feedback to the operators that raises issues regarding missing timetables, visibility (such as advertising clutter), or inaccuracy (outdated information).</p> <p>The installation of the new advertising shelters is in its final stage during which seating, flags and display cases are checked and added if required. Once officers receive confirmation that all snagging issues have been resolved we will be asking Operators to ensure that timetables are in place.</p>
17	<p>Councillors Michael Locke, Kevin Griffiths & Nicola Furlong</p> <p>Now that Swansea's local land charges department has been transferred to the Land Registry, what has happened to the staff who previously worked in this section.</p>

Response of the leader/Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance

The Local Land Charges department has not been transferred to the Land Registry and staff are still employed in their positions.

A local search consists of two parts – a LLC1 and a CON29. The LLC1 provides information from the Local Land Charges Register and includes information such as financial charges, planning agreements, conditional planning permissions, and enforcement notices. The Con29 contains 2 parts and answers a set of standard enquiries that potential buyer may want to know about a property. The first includes questions such as who maintains the highway, full planning history, building control history and TPOs. The second part contains optional questions and may include searches on issues such as road proposals, pollution notices, common land and villages greens.

The information on the LLC1 search is now available from the Land Registry rather than the Council. However, it is the Council's Land Charges team, rather than the Land Registry that is responsible for updating the register.

The Council still processes the CON29 part of the search, responds to queries associated with both parts of the search and provides copies of all documents requested following the search. None of these activities are undertaken by the Land Registry.