



Council – 2 February 2022

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1	<p>Councillor C M J Evans</p> <p>The loss of the wood skip at the Clyne recycling facility has been mentioned a number of times previously. Could the Cabinet Member please confirm the number of complaints about full skips received prior to the removal of the wood skip at the facility, and the number being received now, and what would be the budgetary implications of bringing back the wood skip.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>In 2017-18, the Council received 4 corporate complaints relating to residents being unable to dispose of waste at Clyne as the skips were either full or off site being emptied. In 2019-20, following the changes to wood acceptance, no corporate complaints were received.</p> <p>Previously we have explained that wood recycling which requires additional on-site sorting which would impact the ability of Clyne to accept other recyclable items.</p>
2	<p>Councillors Sam Bennett, Jeff Jones & Lynda James</p> <p>What progress is being made by the Council to respond to complaints of anti-social behaviour from the Coastal Park.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing</p> <p>The Council have received complaints of two instances of anti-social at the coastal park. In both instances, this has involved individuals obtaining access to areas beyond the parkland perimeter onto areas of land not intended for public use.</p> <p>The first of these incidents was on the Western end of the parkland, near Paxton Court, on the listed wall where chippings were thrown down into neighbouring properties' gardens. The boundary fence has since been completed and the gated entry securely padlocked to prevent further occurrences of individuals obtaining access into this area. As a further precautionary measure, the Council are planning to change the surface treatment from chippings so that in the unlikely event that access is obtained again in the future, there will no longer be any loose material to throw.</p> <p>The second and more recent complaint related to an area of the site still under the main contractor's demise, on the revetment wall, between the Arena and the LC. This area is still under construction however a group of individuals obtained access through an unsecured site fence into an area behind the perimeter fence facing</p>

	<p>Victoria Quay. We received reports that a stone was thrown down onto Victoria Quay causing damage to a car, and of other anti-social behaviour. Immediately after receiving these reports, the contractor was asked to resecure their site to prevent access into this area.</p> <p>The coastal park, being part of the new Copr Bay development has a team of staff on or close to the site, providing a presence to help deter anti-social behaviour. As well as the presence of Parks Rangers throughout the day carrying out cleaning and greening duties, City Centre rangers also patrol the area periodically during the day and some evenings as part of their city centre patrols. All staff are encouraged to report any anti-social behaviour observed to the police who also carry out patrols of the area as part of their operations. Additional security is also provided by the CCTV cameras throughout the area, with at least 5 of these having coverage of the coastal park.</p> <p>We would encourage Cllr Bennet to respond to his new PCSOs supporting SA1 and the new designated PC and meet with Council Officers.</p> <p>The Liberal Democrat's have never fully supported the delivery of the arena or Copr Bay. It's delivery put at an end the years of drift, decay, lack of ambition and non-delivery which epitomised the Lib Dem independents administration time in office.</p> <p>Swansea Labour secured the £1.3bn city deal and has delivered a step change in investment for Swansea. We are now overseeing the biggest ever investment in, and regeneration of, Swansea.</p>
3	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien & Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>What work has been carried out so far, in terms of meetings / business plans etc for the Green Powered Ferry Boat Service from South Wales to Devon & Cornwall.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>At the most recent cross-channel stakeholder meeting in autumn of 2022, it was agreed that a working group be established. This expert led group would examine a range of key factors including but not limited to requirements of the terminals and those of the craft which would potentially operate across the route. Owing to the ill health of the working group coordinator, progress on this front has been limited since the stakeholder meeting.</p> <p>In parallel to this, Swansea Council has been in discussions with local authority partners on the Devon side of the channel. The scope of this ongoing engagement is to explore clean propulsion solutions to any future route as it is recognised that any proposal must contribute toward Swansea Council's Net Zero target and further meetings are being arranged with the intention of developing a scope and memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the project by the end of March 2023.</p>
4	<p>Councillors P N May, A J Jeffery, S A Joy & S J Rice</p> <p>Last year the council's tree department's resources were severely stretched. They had to do a lot of work clearing up from storms Anwen (November 2021) and Eunice (February 2022).</p>

The tree department on 18th February did in fact warn that they had only just finished mopping up after Storm Anwen and that the impact of Storm Eunice was that there were lots of jobs that were promised for this winter that are not going to get done.

a. How did this work impact on the debudding programme and other planned maintenance to trees?

b. What contingency did the council make to ensure that these routine but necessary works could be carried out?

If trees are not debudded or pruned in the late winter or early spring there is a consequence in the subsequent November to January. This is that it significantly increases the volume of leaves produced by trees which in turn fall to the ground and need to be cleared. Increased volume of leaf fall causes more slippery pavements and also blocks the grates of drains even though the chambers underneath them are perfectly functional. This has been noticed in the Uplands ward, where residents and councillors have been assisting the council with the clearing effort, and no doubt across the city too.

c. What measures will the council be taking to consider an invest to save approach by doing more preventative work this winter and spring in preparation for next year's leaf fall?

d. Would they consider employing extra tree staff to help or do they consider the current provision is adequate?

e. Could the decision to contemplate removing 50% of additional funding for mechanical brush resource at leaf fall which was agreed by the Cabinet on 22nd December 2022 to make a saving of £25,000 be reconsidered please?

Leaf clearance was also frustrated over the last week of December and early part of the first week of January as some of the mechanical brushes had broken down.

f. How many had broken down, how old are the affected machines, how many are there in the council's fleet?

Please could we have our specific answers in the format of points a-f in the same way that the questions have been asked.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)

2a. For the spring of 2022 we did not carry out any annual re-pollarding of lime trees or plane trees as Tree services were still clearing storm damage from storm Eunice. The storm damage clearance for Eunice took around 3 months ending near the end of May 2022. The storms significantly impacted on the programmed winter work, and may impact on street tree pruning in April and the early summer programmed work. However our teams will continue to do all they can.

2b. Under the present pruning cycle the planes are pruned every year and the limes are pruned every two years. This work has to be carried out when the trees are out of leaf during the dormant period as the stress of doing it while in leaf would be harmful to the trees. The reason we prune the limes every two years is that annual pruning proved to be too stressful for many trees and trees can be lost through over pruning.

During the pruning programme if trees are missed for any reason then they are worked on the following season. Pruning in 2020 was affected by lockdowns and then had to prune in 2021 to catch up. If we had been able to prune in 2022 therefore we would only have been pruning the plane trees.

2c. With regard to the pollarded trees, subject to no further major storm damage, we will be pruning all the trees in this spring starting the first week of April and then returning to the previous cycle of Planes every year and limes every two years.

With regard to all other trees that are not pollards we are not able to pollard them to attempt to lessen leaf fall. Wherever possible we try to avoid creating new pollards, the process is damaging if its carried out on a mature or semi mature trees and it should only be considered as a last option for tree care. What tends to happen with pollards is that the process itself causes rapid regrowth with the trees creating larger leaves in an attempt to gain as much sun light as possible. These larger leaves are then more likely to cause issues with drainage and build-up of fallen leaf.

2d. The present staff numbers are capable of carrying out this work programme. For other tree work outside of this programme Parks Tree Services Unit team are able to deal with urgent and essential tree surgery jobs but do not have the provision or capacity to deal with non-essential or low priority work.

It should be noted that there have been exceptional circumstances over the last 30 years when we have left the pollarded trees for various reasons such as tree health, lockdowns and storms but we always start again the following year.

2e. Resources will only be finalised once Council determines the budget for 2023/24.

2f. We currently have 12 mechanical brushes within our fleet.

5 Councillor C M J Evans

Has the council carried out a climate change impact assessment for Swansea that identifies local climate change impacts within the county and the adaptations that will be required.

Response of the Cabinet Members for Service Transformation and Corporate Services & Performance

Climate Change impacts are currently recognised within the 2010-2025 Local Development Plan in regard to planning. See page 184-187 (ER 1)

https://www.swansea.gov.uk/media/5436/Swansea-LDP-2010-2025/pdf/Swansea_Local_Development_Plan_2010-2025.pdf?m=1643721669737

However more recently, we have been in discussion with WLGA about developing a more ambitious county wide Adaptation & Mitigation plan, to align with their proposed framework.

Adaptation Framework

System	Sub-systems	Risk areas
Water	Public water, water abstraction, wastewater	Drought, depleting supply, sanitation, irrigation(?), water quality, habitat loss
Food	Production, distribution, supply chain	Pests, diseases, risk to crops, biodiversity, supply chains, soil health, habitat loss
Working lands and seas	Forestry, energy crops, agriculture, fisheries	Pests, diseases, risk to crops, biodiversity, soil health, heating, drought, extreme weather events, coastal risks, erosion, flood management, habitat loss
Nature	Terrestrial and Aquatic	Flood management, extreme weather events, coastal risk, biodiversity loss, habitat loss
Towns & Cities	Flood defence, urban green/blue infrastructure, surface drainage, rural/urban connectivity	Heating and cooling, supply chains, flooding
Buildings	Public sector, private sector, industrial	Heating and cooling, supply chains, flooding, lock/in
Community	Community preparedness/just transition	displaced populations, heritage, cultural adaptations, supply chains
Health	Resilience, community, healthcare system	New diseases
Business	Preparedness/resilience, opportunities	Productivity impacts, economic losses, finance, supply chain
Transport	Road, rail, ports, airport	Security, resilience, supply chains
Energy	Fuel supply, electricity, energy networks, heat	Security, lock-in
Telecoms ICT	Waste and Resilience	Supply chain, security, waste
Coal Tip Safety		Security, biodiversity, habitat loss, resilience, waste

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The intention is that, subject to funding, the council will engaged a specialist to develop the plan in collaboration with members of the newly formed climate signatories group (Those parties that have signed up to the Swansea Climate & Nature Charter).

The first meeting is due to be held later this month and includes members from the existing PSB, business, health, universities, colleges and environmental partners etc. Most importantly it includes Natural Resources Wales who will play a key role, not just for Swansea, but Nationally, in developing such plans.

It is anticipated that this group can then drive and deliver the Swansea wide plan.

6 Councillors Mark Tribe, Sam Bennett & Michael Locke

Is the Cabinet Member aware of the number of cancelled and late buses in Swansea and if so, can they confirm if they are on routes subsidised by the Council.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

I am aware and share the concerns about late or cancelled bus services. The Leader and key officers have met with bus operators, specifically First, to raise concerns and discuss the ongoing operational issues.

The four bus companies who operate services in the City & County of Swansea have advised the Council that they are still experiencing staff recruitment and retention issues for various reasons. Coupled with 'on the day' sickness, the reliability of some of their services is therefore still being affected. At least two of the companies are pro-actively employing agency drivers from outside the area to make up their shortfalls. However, the Council has been advised that a bus driver can usually leave a company's employment by giving only one week's notice, yet it can take up to 12 weeks to train a new driver, when the theory and practical driving tests and all the route learning are taken into account.

Approximately 80% of the local bus network is operated by the bus companies on a commercial basis, whilst the remaining 20% is operated under contract to the Council.

The bus companies can choose which services they operate on a commercial basis. Since deregulation, the Council does not have control over the days of the week and the times of day that they operate, the frequencies of the services, the routes taken, the sizes of buses employed and the fare levels charged. Whilst it can raise concerns with the bus companies over late and cancelled buses which are operated on commercial services, in reality, it does not have any powers to take action against them. The Council is not routinely made aware of the exact number of late and cancelled commercially operated buses.

Conversely, the Council has a direct control over the services operated by the bus companies under contract. In instances of late and cancelled buses, directly under the bus companies' control, the Council can levy financial penalties and award penalty points, and can ultimately cancel contracts. The bus companies are obliged to make the Council aware of any cancelled contracted services when they occur, but not those subject to late running. Most late running and cancellations are due to roadworks, road closures, route diversions and adverse weather conditions. Where a bus company operates a mix of commercial and contracted services, priority is usually given to ensuring that the Council's contracted services are operated, and in reality, there are very few instances when contracted services are cancelled for a reason within a bus company's control. In these instances, the Council will work with a bus company to seek a resolution. As a result, the Council has not had cause to cancel a contract with a bus company in recent years.

We are keen to work with Welsh Government on new public transport models and arrangements, with the council potentially having greater control and involvement in the running of services. The delivery of the South West Wales metro will provide an opportunity to achieve this. .

Part B – No Supplementaries

7 Councillors Mary Jones, Peter Black & Graham Thomas

What work has been carried out in monitoring the effectiveness of Passivhaus and Swansea Standard homes compared to other council properties and will the Cabinet Member publish the results of any studies.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

Background

The Council has engaged the Welsh School of Architecture (WSA) at Cardiff University to work in partnership as part of the Specific 2 Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE) project to develop and monitor the new build housing in Swansea. WSA have also been partners in the development and monitoring of the retrofit scheme of 6 bungalows in Craigcefn Parc (see below for further information on this scheme).

Monitoring equipment has been installed, and is used to collect data remotely. WSA also carry out engagement with the tenants to assess how the homes are used to sit alongside the data. Not all tenants agree to participate in the monitoring study and there are GDPR issues to consider when using and sharing the information.

Passivhaus Scheme

Long term monitoring equipment was installed in the Passivhaus site which allowed the assessment of energy use and comfort post occupancy performance of the 18 houses. The results confirmed that the fabric-only approach used in Passivhaus could be enriched by a whole energy systems-based approach that would reduce the operational energy, carbon and cost without increasing the capital cost resulting in high quality, affordable homes for residents.

Different combinations of system based solutions were tested using data-driven modelling around a base case. It was found that even though thermal performance and airtightness was not quite up to Passivhaus standards, capital cost savings could be used for low carbon systems which would ensure lower operational energy, CO2 and cost to run.

Swansea Standard

Following on from the new build pilot of the 18 Passivhaus homes in 2018 (Colliers Way 1 development), Swansea Council went on to develop its own Swansea Standard for new build housing. The Swansea Standard is a Fabric First approach, which uses key principles of Passivhaus design, is a 25% improvement on current building regulations, maximises solar gain through orientation, incorporating high performance triple glazed windows, high levels of mass insulation, no thermal bridging, and extremely high levels of airtightness with a target of 4 air changes per minute.

The Swansea Standard is then combined with innovative technologies to create Homes as Power Stations. These homes all have Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHPs), PV solar roofs, battery storage and Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery (MVHR) Systems, and will be able store and use their own energy

Swansea has applied the new Standard across all sites (59 homes completed to date with a further 6 to be completed in Feb 2023) and the LCBE team are continuing to monitor the new homes to provide reassurance that performance and comfort in practice are as designed, the results are being compared against the Passivhaus outcomes. First-year results confirmed the modelling projections and when compared to the Passivhaus Swansea development, the new Swansea Standard, developed in collaboration with Cardiff University LCBE team, exceeded operational energy savings and provided stable comfort levels with similar capital cost outlay.

Data Outcomes

The mean daily energy consumption for the Passivhaus was 19.0kWh, whereas for similar homes in the Swansea Standard developments it was 18.1kWh. 10.6kWh of the 18.1kWh is imported from the grid and paid for by the occupants. The remaining energy is provided either from the PV panels directly and or from the battery; 2.7kWh is exported back to the grid which provides potential for income.

Operational energy imported by the Swansea Standard homes is 44% lower than the Passivhaus which is vital in terms of fuel poverty and affordability. The energy consumed by the Swansea Standard homes is 62% lower and imported energy (paid) is 78% lower when compared to an average UK house of a similar size.

Therefore, on average the occupants in the Swansea Standard houses will pay for approximately 1/5 of the energy that an occupant in an average Welsh house would pay. The SAP rating across the new build sites averages **104, with an EPC rating A, compared to Passivhaus schemes, which average 86 with an EPC rating B.**

In addition to the energy performance, the Swansea Standard homes have a superior comfort performance. The Swansea and LCBE team monitoring and qualitative data from surveys have enabled heat distribution to be optimised providing stable temperatures throughout the homes and together with humidity figures all fall within the recommended range.

Retrofit Scheme – Craig Cefn Parc

Six bungalows have been retrofitted with an innovative whole house energy system as part of a collaboration between the LCBE team at the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University and Swansea Council. The bungalows were off the mains gas grid.

The homes were very expensive to heat, with damp and mould problems, and very low SAP ratings (as low as 12). The objectives were to aim towards zero carbon by reducing the energy demand, to be met as much as possible with renewable supply and storage whilst ensuring comfortable and affordable homes for the residents.

The measures to reduce energy demand included external wall and loft insulation, double glazed windows, replacement of poorly insulated PVC window frames as well as Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) and LED lighting. Technologies to meet demand with renewable energy include photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, lithium ion battery storage and a Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP).

The process of designing the project, was supported by pre-retrofit monitoring as well as thermal and energy modelling to analyse the performance of the buildings and ensure that decisions were well informed. Following the completion of the construction stage, a comprehensive monitoring campaign continued to quantify the outcomes of the project. This invaluable information has provided valuable evidence on how the objectives have been met. The original fossil fuel heating sources have been replaced by Ground Source Heat Pumps and radiators have been replaced by new more efficient radiators providing a more efficient central heating system, which is sufficient to heat the house following the fabric improvements. These changes combined with the PV, battery enable this significant improvement.

The residents remained in their homes whilst the work was carried out, this added extra complexity but would have added extra cost and disruption for the resident if they had been moved out. The team worked hard to demonstrate that a whole house retrofit can be successfully delivered in occupied homes.

The Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) improved from **EPC G to A, with SAP ratings increasing from 12 to 95.** The average annual energy consumption of each home was 5MWh compared to the UK average of 15MWh per home – a 66% reduction. Of the total 5MWh used, 2.8MWh was provided by the PV solar panels and lithium ion battery with only 2.2MWh from the national grid. During the summer months an excess of 2MWh is generated.

Operational carbon emissions were very high before the retrofits at 3,312 Kg CO₂e per year, as residents used oil and LPG for heating and hot water. Following the improvements this reduced to 197 Kg CO₂e – a 95% reduction.

Comparisons Existing Stock

The Council has recently met the deadline for bringing its properties up the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). The standard requires homes have a good level of thermal efficiency and to meet a target SAP score 65. The average SAP rating for the current stock is now 68. Welsh Government is now set to introduce new targets into its Welsh Housing Quality Standard for social housing which will make it a requirement for homes to be highly efficient (with a SAP score of 92), affordable and virtually carbon neutral places to live.

The Council has already introduced energy saving measures into the specification of its major repair schemes such as external wall insulation, high performing loft insulation that goes beyond industry standards, new more efficient double glazing and highly efficient heating systems. In order to work towards the new standard, the Council is currently designing a number of schemes which will include renewable technologies such as photovoltaic solar panels, batteries to store the electricity generated by the panels as well as air source heat pumps for localities which are not on the mains gas network.

There are approximately 12 schemes in varying stages of development where the Council intends to begin rolling out in 2023/24. Monitoring will also be carried out on these schemes. The 12 schemes represents a very small proportion of the housing stock and to achieve this across the Council's housing stock will require major additional funding from Welsh or central governments.

The introduction of Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2, which is expected to be implemented later in 2023, is also expected to introduce new monitoring requirements to assess the current stock and measure the impact of future improvements that will be outlined as part of the new requirements.

8 **Councillors Mary Jones, James McGettrick & Wendy Fitzgerald**

Will the Cabinet Member tell Council how many job vacancies there are currently for both Children's and Adult Social Care services.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

Councillors will be aware of the continued extreme pressures in health and social care services across Wales and indeed the whole of the UK. These pressures are undoubtedly exacerbated by the workforce shortages that all Health Boards and Councils are experiencing in some of our critical frontline services.

Despite a comprehensive workforce strategy that include numerous actions in relation to recruitment, retention and workforce wellbeing, we haven't yet sufficiently stabilised capacity in some key areas:

In children services there are currently 30 frontline social worker vacancies across a range of teams.

These gaps in capacity are currently being mitigated in the short term through recourse to the use of agency social workers and the over recruitment of alternatively qualified staff.

We have a longer term 'grow our own' strategy which includes our recently launched social work academy and sponsoring of alternatively qualified staff to achieve a social work qualification through the Open University.

In adult services there are currently 20 frontline social worker vacancies across a range of teams, 50 vacancies in direct service provision (residential care and day services) and 20 vacancies in domiciliary care.

Gaps in social work capacity are being mitigated through utilising alternatively qualified staff (including health board trusted assessors), recourse to agency staff and externally commissioning additional assessment capacity.

Vacancies in direct service provision are mitigated through recourse to both the Council's in house agency team and the use of independent agency workers to cover specific shifts.

Vacancies in domiciliary care capacity are mitigated to some extent by recourse to our in house agency team.

The number of vacancies and level of recourse to the use of agency staff is comparable with most local authorities.