



Council – 30 March 2023

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1	<p>Councillors Paxton Hood-Williams & Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>Will the Leader of the council set out the council strategy for the future of Swansea Airport.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>Given recent events, the Council are now reviewing its legal position and Officers will be updating Cabinet in April.</p>
2	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member explain what it meant by "Divest the Council's interest in St Helens" as mentioned on page 38 of Medium-Term Financial Plan (Council Summons 2 March 2023). As divest in the dictionary means <i>to deprive someone of or to rid oneself of an interest</i> is the Council planning to sell or transfer St Helens to someone else.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>The current use and quality of facilities of St Helens has significantly changed over recent years and the Council and key stakeholders all recognise that significant investment is required to ensure it remains a fit for purpose, well used and well maintained in order for the venue to remain a key facility as part of Swansea's rich sporting offer. The venue is no longer used as a permanent first-class cricket facility, due to Glamorgan Cricket Clubs decision to relocate to Cardiff. Additionally with costs and practicalities of utilising the ground for the annual 5 days festival becoming more challenging, this has meant Glamorgan Cricket Club have not used the venue since 2019.</p> <p>Swansea Council are currently in dialogue with partners and key stakeholders regarding the future of St Helens. We are investigating ways to enhance the sporting offer at this historic venue, as well as providing much needed investment and economic development for the city. We envisage that any future model will be more sustainable for the Council, enabling the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings against revenue to be delivered. The reference to divesting our interest relates to annual revenue subsidy, as opposed to divesting interest in the venue entirely, as we recognise the outcomes and benefits it brings to Swansea as a whole. The Council would like to ensure that any future model would retain and improve the economic, social and wellbeing outcomes and benefits longer term.</p>

	<p>The new arrangements which are currently being explored are likley to unlock significant opportunities for external capital investment into the venue, ensuring that the venue remains a key part of Swansea community sporting offer for future generations to enjoy.</p>
3	<p>Councillors Richard Lewis & Francesca O'Brien</p> <p>Gower is set to see another jammed pack Summer with sporting events taking place this year and with Gower beaches being promoted across the UK, we are sure to see even higher footfall. Would the Leader agree to investing more money into Gower roads.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>Swansea Council has agreed funding of £5m to improve roads this is on top of any Welsh Government allocation. There was no new capital allocation to Wales as part of the last chancellor's autumn budget statement so additional monies for local councils has not been made available. The details of which roads are to be resurfaced will be released once the programme has been confirmed.</p> <p>In addition, Gower benefits from additional investment. When events such as the Ironman take place a specific inspection of the highway is undertaken, and the condition of the route is discussed with event organisers and repairs carried out as required.</p>
4	<p>Councillors Will Thomas, Angela O'Connor & Francesca O'Brien</p> <p>Mumbles Ward Councillors welcome the news that more money will be used to create disabled parking bays as part of the new budget. Can the Leader / Cabinet Member confirm how councillors can request funding to support this initiative in their ward.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The funding to support the introduction of disabled bays has recently been introduced. Detailed consideration on how this will be managed is currently being reviewed and will be shared once this process is complete.</p>
5	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member explain what is meant by: "Reduce Library Service 'footprint' through providing accommodation and shared services via SitC - work needed to assess costs to other services versus reduced costs to the Library service" saving £400k per year for the next three years (starting 24/25) on page 37 of the Medium Term Financial Plan (Council Summons 2 March 2023). Does footprint, as it normally means, buildings.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Culture & Equalities</p> <p>A number of 'transformation' and change strategies are either currently in preparation or already underway for the Authority, including for Accommodation, Customer Contact and provision of services in the community via 'Community Hubs' and shared public sector buildings, as well as with other third sector organisations. Historic savings targets for the Library Service, dating back to</p>

	<p>previous commissioning reviews, need to be considered against these strategies and how the current estate of 17 libraries, including tenanted and stand-alone buildings, can be aligned with these numerous strategies, whilst meeting contemporary needs and challenges faced by our communities and services. Library buildings and the activities that take place within them, are diverse and we will review the opportunities to reduce the ‘footprint’ costs to the service, by assessing how premises costs, roles and responsibilities can be shared, as will be the case for the new City Centre Community Hub. The maintenance of the library service, fulfilling Welsh Public Library Standards will remain a priority.</p>
6	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Mark Tribe & Sam Bennett</p> <p>Now that the LDP is going to be reviewed, and bearing in mind that over 17,000 new homes were due to be delivered by 2025, could the Cabinet Member inform Council as to the number of new homes actually delivered to date.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>The Swansea LDP identifies a housing requirement for the 15 year period of the Plan (2010-25) of 15,600 homes. The Plan provides for up to 17,600 homes by means of allocations, ‘windfall’ sites, and those with planning permissions in place, which serves to provide a buffer/flexibility margin for delivery. As reported in the latest LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR 3), which was endorsed at the 2nd March Council meeting, as of 31st March 2022 just under 6000 (5,952) dwellings have so far been recorded as completed since the start of the Plan period. There are three years remaining of the Plan period and the number of completions have significantly increased since 31st March 2022. The monitoring of the exact completion figures is a continual process and the next AMR will report on the total build figures for the Plan period up to end of March 2023.</p>
7	<p>Councillors Francesca O’Brien & Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>We understand that due to the ill health of the lead coordinator for the Devon / Swansea ferry working group discussions have been delayed, however, due to the importance of this pioneering facility, what is the work schedule for the cross channel working group for 2023.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>There is no single “group” taking forward proposals for a Hydrogen Devon/Swansea ferry. It is correct that one of these groups the Council has been involved in has indeed been delayed due to ill health, but the Council continues to work with other partners to explore the opportunity. These opportunities include exploring using the route as a “hydrogen test bed” as part of the wider development of hydrogen shipping technology and the legislative framework.</p> <p>In addition, there have been separate exchanges between a potential operator and Swansea Council which at this time are commercially sensitive and meetings are arranged in the next few weeks. Council will be updated as the matter progresses.</p>

8	<p>Councillors Lesley Walton, Mike Lewis, Wendy Lewis, Mike White & Phil Downing</p> <p>Given the pressures currently faced by the health service and in domiciliary care, can the Cabinet member outline what Adult Services is doing around reablement and to help people to live independently without need of a care package.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Care Services</p> <p>Bonymaen House offers temporary residential reablement for people leaving hospital or from the community. This is provided through an integrated approach. The service is funded by the Council with health staff providing therapy, nursing input and a service level agreement with the local GP surgery.</p> <p>During 22/23 there have been 214 temporary residents, staying an average of 28.3 days. The outcomes have been 59% returning home with no package of care and 8% with a reduced package of care during this period. This has increased in recent months, during November to January 36 people returned home independently and only 3 returned home with a package of care. The service has operated at between 18 and 20 beds during the last 12 months and due to the success has recently increased this to 24 beds.</p> <p>The Home Care in-house domiciliary care reablement service work closely with colleagues as part of the Home First initiative (aligned to Welsh Government Discharge to Recover and Assess pathway) to facilitate hospital avoidance and timely hospital discharge. They work towards same day admission arrangements for commencement of packages of care and where this isn't possible due to capacity early identification of alternative support to mitigate impact on a person's wellbeing outcomes. We are working alongside our colleagues in commissioning to facilitate transfer of longer term packages of care to free up capacity.</p> <p>Home Care reablement have strengthened a multi-disciplinary approach to offer wrap around support to individuals in the community, including from suitably qualified Occupational and physiotherapists, community nursing, medicines management, community care staff, social work and third sector.</p>
9	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Mary Jones, Kevin Griffiths</p> <p>Swansea has some key routes leading into the city centre. Could the Cabinet Member advise what arrangements are in place to ensure these roads are regularly cleaned so that verges and central reservations are not strewn with unsightly litter.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>We have recently had to change the arrangements for cleansing the main arteries into Swansea. In order to keep staff safe we are using lane closures when litter picking. There was a recent gap in service whilst this new method of working was being set up which allowed litter to build up. Now this is set up, the regular cleansing will again be undertaken to address the concerns raised.</p>
10	<p>Councillors Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor</p> <p>After receiving the shocking news of the food hygiene rating for Bishop Gore School (2 star), what measures are the council taking to ensure this is rapidly improved so</p>

	<p>we can reassure concerned parents who have contacted us with their concerns about this.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning</p> <p>The hygienic handling of food including preparation, cooking, re-heating, cooling and storage was found to be very good at the time of the last inspection in July 2022.</p> <p>Unfortunately, some structural issues with the kitchen were identified along with issues with the freezers and the outside food waste storage area.</p> <p>The council addressed all of the matters identified during the school summer holidays of 2022, and our school meal service is making regular visits to ensure high standards are maintained.</p> <p>We are confident that when the kitchen is reassessed the rating will improve, and parents and pupils can be reassured that the food at Bishop Gore is prepared and served to a high standard.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Given the recent high profile announcements regarding the proposed flights to Exeter from Swansea airport, coupled with the other recent reports that the operating license of the airport has been suspended, when can we expect the first service to cross the Bristol Channel to Devon. What plans does the Council have to address the issues at the airport.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>The Council is not in a position to confirm timescales for the new scheduled services at Swansea Airport as these are very much operational matters for Swansea Airport Limited. The Council has no involvement with day-to-day operations or management of the facility. However, it is clear that given recent events, these services would likely be postponed until the CAA licensing position has been finalised.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Builders can apply for a waiver which they must display in their windscreen to park in a residents' parking bay free of charge for up to 28 days. In the digital application form on the council's website, it states: "We will only issue waivers on a street once checks have been made and given that there is adequate space available in the area."</p> <p>A. What are the checks</p> <p>B. What is the basis of the calculation to define adequate space in the area and how is the area defined if residents' permits usually define a street</p> <p>C. How many applications have been received in the calendar year of 2022 and how many have been rejected? (Please if possible can this be broken down by ward)</p>

	<p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>A. How many waivers are already issued to the Company – we allow a maximum of two waivers at any one time. How many waivers have been issued for the premises i.e., where the work is being carried out – we allow a maximum of three waivers at any one time. That the vehicle has business use insurance to ensure that private residents do not apply for waivers as a means of parking without a resident permit. Is there unrestricted parking on the street and are there resident parking bays to allow us to issue a waiver.</p> <p>B. Most of the streets in Swansea have unrestricted parking. We do not generally issue waivers if there is unrestricted parking on street, there are Pay & Display bays or if there are loading bays on street. We determine how many waivers can be issued for a street by determining the length of the street, the number and length of the resident bays in the street and if there is any alternative parking. For example, St. Helens Road is 583.5m long and it has four resident bays in it totalling 16m long. Therefore, we will issue a maximum of five waivers at any one time for St. Helens Road.</p> <p>C. We can provide December’s numbers because that is when we moved to a virtual permit system. However, we do not have an electronic method for reporting on the rest of 2022. This information is not therefore readily available and would involve a lengthy a manual exercise of checking every email received during the year and the response given to determine the figures. In December 2022, we received 41 waiver applications. 32 were accepted and nine were rejected. This would be fairly typical of the level of monthly applications received. Applications tend to be concentrated in and around wards within the city centre.</p>
13	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>During the budget debate at the council meeting of 2nd March 2023 the leader commentated the chamber through a powerpoint presentation. Was this an official council document which the council endorsed or was it his own personal production.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>The presentation was created by the Leader using information from the suite of budget documents discussed at the meeting and prepared by officers.</p>
14	<p>Councillors James McGettrick, Jeff Jones, Lynda James, Michael Locke & Cheryl Philpott</p> <p>We have been made aware of difficulties in the running of Swansea Airport. Will the Cabinet Member respond to the following questions:-</p> <p>(a) The Council decided to award a new lease to the current leaseholder, Swansea Airport Ltd. (SAL) on January 19th. Last week the CAA suspended the airport licence for several safety related issues, including systemic failure of airport safety systems. Most of these failures have been the cause that the airport licence has been suspended for periods over the past 15 years. This is a case of 'repeat offending'. Since SAL have been unable to meet the prime lease requirement of maintaining the airport licence in the past, how do the Council propose to secure compliance with the new lease.</p>

(b) The lease has required the airport to be open for 350 days per year. For the past few years the airport has been closed on Mondays and Tuesdays and, on many occasions, on other days at short notice. SAL has therefore failed to comply with another prime lease requirement. Why did the Council accept advice from its Legal Department that SAL had complied with the lease.

(c) In light of the February 2023 findings by the CAA which were described in the press and online as a “systemic failure of safety management” and cited ineffective safety management, inadequate safeguarding of the aerodrome and an absence of an accountable manager, what is Swansea Council doing to ensure that the tenant (Swansea Airport Ltd.) completes the vital work on time.

(d) According to NOTAMs issued by the CAA the fuel licence has been suspended and the commercial licence has been suspended yet again.

(e) The suspension of the commercial licence means that no scheduled or charter flights can take place at Swansea Airport and the lack of fuel means that resident aircraft are flown to aerodromes like Shobdon (Herefordshire), Cardiff or St.Athan, so could the renewal of the airport lease with the present tenant be reviewed.

(f) During the 19th January 2023 video conference about the renewal of the airport lease the Cabinet Member mentioned that there were current breaches in the lease as well as historic failings, but the council had very limited legal grounds on which to oppose renewal. Surely this means that there is some legal “wriggle room” and as a result of recent events there are significant reasons for the Cabinet to review their decision and will the council now go down this route.

(g) Had any Cabinet Members visited Swansea Airport before the Cabinet meeting if you had you would have seen the very poor state of the infrastructure. Another Councillor saw this on his visit and mentioned during the live video conference of 19th January 2023. Plus did you and other Cabinet Members take note of what the three other contributors to the video conference mentioned.

(h) Did Council officers visit Swansea Airport periodically to check that their property was being well maintained by the tenant, that the equipment and vehicles were working, being well maintained and that any equipment/vehicles that were beyond repair were suitably replaced before being disposed of? Did the Council officials who inspected Swansea Airport report breaches of the landlord tenant agreement to the Legal Department.

(i) Did the Council officers and Councillors who attended recent meetings with the CAA, etc, at Swansea Airport supply the Cabinet Members with details (minutes, etc) for consideration.

(j) Regarding the briefing documents provided by the Council officers for the cabinet to consider, did members of the cabinet ask for any points to be clarified or query the recommendation? Will these documents be available for public scrutiny so that they can be compared with past and present CAA findings and other sources.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance

(a) Given recent events, the Council are now reviewing its legal position and Officers will be updating Cabinet in April.

(b) The Council has considered the various lease breaches and its legal position is explained in full within the closed version of the Cabinet reported dated 19th January 2023. These point of law were not contained within the open version of the report as the Council has to be mindful of the existing Landlord and Tenant relationship that exists.

Nevertheless, as explained above, the recent CAA situation will require the Council to review its legal position further before it can confirm the next course of action.

(c) The CAA's decision to suspend the operating licence was taken after Cabinet decision on the 19th January 2023. At the time of reporting to Cabinet, there was no evidence to suggest the CAA were considering a suspension of the operating licence. A copy of the September 2022 CAA audit report was included within the open & closed versions of the Cabinet report and is available for review.

Officers are currently working with Swansea Airport Limited with a view to them meeting the CAA deadline but these matters are of operational nature which the Council has limited control over.

(d) The Council is aware of the current NOTAM and issues regarding aircraft refuelling. These matters will be addressed further within the updated Cabinet report which is expected in April.

(e) As explained above, the recent CAA situation will require the Council to review its legal position further before it can confirm the next course of action.

(f) The Council has considered the various lease breaches and its legal position is explained in full within the closed version of the Cabinet reported dated 19th January 2023. These point of law were not contained within the open version of the report as the Council has to be mindful of the existing Landlord and Tenant relationship that exists.

Nevertheless, as explained above, the recent CAA situation will require the Council to review its legal position further before it can confirm the next course of action.

(g) The Leader and Deputy Leader visited the site prior to the Cabinet decision on 19th January 2023. Councillors will be aware that Officers presented an open and closed version of the report to Cabinet which addressed all estate management issues and points of law.

Councillors may wish to familiarise themselves with the ingoing Schedule of Condition (dated 1991) contained within the open & closed of the Cabinet reports which illustrates the condition at the time of the original letting. As explained within the report, Swansea Airport Limited (or their successors in title) are not obligated to yield up the property in any better condition than as documented within the schedule and this is an important factor in determining the recommendation.

(h) Council Officers have been working closely with Swansea Airport Limited to address some of the historic issues and prior to recent events, significant progress had been made. The legal issues surrounding Landlords Equipment are also covered within the closed report and Councillors may wish to familiarise themselves with these point of law.

(i) The Council is not party to the operating licence and therefore does not have a relationship with the CAA. All licencing issues are made between the CAA and the licence holder, Swansea Airport Limited. However, prior to the Cabinet decision, the Accountable Manager provided the Council with a copy of the most recent CAA audit and this is available for review within the report appendices.

(j) For the reasons already mentioned above, the Council is mindful that members of the public do not have access to the closed report and therefore it would not be appropriate to publish any Cabinet queries regarding points of law. With regard the CAA position, the CAA carried out an audit in September 2022 and this was published within both the open and closed report (with the express permission of the tenant). Subject to that further permission officers will ensure a copy of the most recent CAA suspension notice is included within updated Cabinet report to ensure full transparency.

15 Councillors Peter Black, Chris Holley & Mary Jones

Would the Leader outline the additional spending items he announced in council on 2nd March, which were not in the budget papers, and identify the funds that will pay for them.

Response of the Leader

The additional proposed capital investment contained in the evening’s budget presentation, proposed to be funded from the residual ERF fund (after establishing the Energy Reserve) included :

free bus rides local & community bus service assistance	£1M
community centres energy assistance (as part of the energy support fund)	£250,000
levelling up based on need	£1M
new play areas	£500,000
new nature trails/natural play	£100,000
disabled parking bays & disabled access	£135,000
additional new bus shelters/bins	£150,000
highways repair patch teams	£450,000
drainage/flood avoidance team	£350,000
coronation road closures support	£20,000
CCTV mobile pods	£50,000
additional youth engagement	£100,000

The total includes £250k contained within the £15m energy fund