



To:
**Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet
Member for Corporate Services and
Performance**

BY EMAIL

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch
am:*

*Direct Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail
e-Bost:*

*Date
Dyddiad:*

Scrutiny

01792 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

2 May 2023

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance concerning the meeting held on 18 April 2023 and the Q3 Performance Monitoring Report 2022/23. This letter does not require a response.

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

On the 18 April, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Q3 Performance Monitoring Report 2022/23. The Panel are grateful to the Leader and Richard Rowlands, Corporate Performance Manager, for attending to discuss and answer questions.

We noted that overall performance shows improvement and that for Quarter 3, 19 of the 27 comparable indicators show improving or maintaining trends. 1 indicator demonstrates a decline that was within 5% of the previous result and 7 which show a drop in performance. We were informed that performance indicators are being reviewed in line with the development of the corporate plan and any changes around that would be brought back to the Panel.

Safeguarding

We noted the 6 new indicators which were mainly introduced as a result of the National Social Services Performance Framework introduced by the Welsh Government. We also commented on the decline in the number of children and young people supported by the Early Help Hubs. It is indicated that this is in part due to the way in which information is recorded on the IT system although how this effect has occurred was unclear.

Education and Skills

The decline in training and employment weeks was noted however the report informed us that this was due to the Copper Bae project being near completion so the explanation for the decline is well documented.

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GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAW, SA1 4PE

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Economy and Infrastructure

We raised our concern regarding the lack of performance information in the report relating to highways. The officer told us that some data was previously contained within the corporate suite some years ago as they were part of the national framework of public accountability measures from Welsh Government however these have now been removed.

The Leader explained that the pothole pledge is being considered for modification to allow more time for a more substantial repair and alongside it the patch repair programme which looks at wider surface defects, is also being reviewed. He reminded us of the additional £5m funding for roads repairs and the further half a million by bringing forward some of the programme funding for 24/25 into this year. The Leader also informed us that they have lobbied both UK and Welsh Governments for additional funds for road repairs.

We felt that some of the issues with potholes relate to the lack resources and not a reflection of the work of the highways team, as they are dealing with a backlog of road repairs as well as an increase in the number of cars on roads and an increased weight of vehicles and agree that additional funds are required to reduce the backlog.

We will invite Councillor Andrew Stevens and relevant officers to attend a future Panel meeting, we are aware this team are very busy and therefore wish to focus the conversation on the process and criteria for pot holes and road repairs as this is an important issue.

Tackling Poverty

We noted that the speed of processing Housing Benefits and Council Tax reduction claims has declined. We asked if measures were in place to improve this and the officer informed us measures were but one of the key contributors to the decline is the training of replacement staff which is currently taking place meaning time is required to increase productivity levels.

We also wanted to highlight this quarter's performance of the welfare rights team and the amount of benefits secured through their work which we felt merits recognition in the public domain regarding the difference this service makes.

Nature Recovery and Climate Change

We queried the time scales for the new climate emergency and nature recovery indicators and the officer informed us of the aim to introduce these in Quarter 1 23/24 although the officer expressed this area of performance was one of the more challenging areas and these are in development at the moment. Once more information is available on these indicators the officer has agreed to bring it to the Panels attention.

Your Response

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Chris Holley

Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

✉ cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk