

Swansea LPA

PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2022-23

PREFACE

I have the pleasure of introducing the Annual Performance Report (APR) for Swansea Council's Planning Service. APR's were introduced as part of Welsh Government proposals to modernise the planning system and improve local delivery of planning services. The Council's Planning Service is responsible for protecting the amenity and unique natural and built environment of our city and countryside in the public interest and facilitating sustainable development and the economic regeneration of our urban and rural areas. Having adopted the Swansea Local Development Plan the Council has an up-to-date planning policy framework which sets out a clear and ambitious vision for the future growth and regeneration of the City, its communities, economy and natural environment. In this context the APR provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Planning Service is responding positively to the challenges of evolving national planning guidance and the principles of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act and the Environment (Wales) Act. In this respect the Planning Service presents the most tangible means of translating the Council's corporate objectives, commitments and regeneration agenda into development on the ground with the overall aim of improving the quality of life for local residents and building more sustainable communities.

Councillor David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance

CONTEXT

- 1.0 This section sets out the planning context within which the local planning authority operates.**
- 1.1 The City and County of Swansea covers an area of 378 square kilometres (about 2% of the area of Wales), approximately 66% of which is rural and 34% urban. The city is the second largest in Wales and the regional centre for South West Wales. As well as being characterised by a highly development central area and surrounding settlements, the County benefits from a number of high-quality natural environments that are part of its rural hinterland.
- 1.2 The policies and proposals set out in the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) seek to address the County's need for new homes, jobs, infrastructure and community facilities to support economic growth and raise standards of living. Policies to promote development sit alongside and complement those that will ensure future proposals respect and promote the County's cultural heritage, important landscapes and sensitive environments. A clear 'placemaking' agenda is promoted which emphasises that future development must accord with the overarching aims of enhancing quality of life and well-being.
- 1.3 Swansea lies at the heart of the Swansea Bay City Region and the nature of future growth and development management will be critical to shaping the regional geographies of South West Wales. In particular, the aspirations for the City Region seek to significantly boost economic investment and activity, with an associated substantial uplift required in development, including housing.

2.0 Planning background,

2.1 The Swansea LDP, which was adopted in February 2019, provides the policy context for the period up to 2025. It superseded the Swansea Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2001-2016).

3.0 Place and fit within the community strategy and/or wider strategic and operational activity of the authority.

3.1 The Swansea Public Service Board's Local Well Being Plan: Working together to improve well-being in Swansea (2023-2028) has four objectives relating to Early Years, Live Well, Age Well; Climate Change & Nature Recovery; and Strong Communities underpinned by key themes of Housing, the Economy and the Environment which are supported by the planning system.

3.3 The LDP seeks to deliver the land use, regeneration and natural environment enhancement objectives expressed in the Local Well Being Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan, together with other Council strategies, plans and programmes.

4.0 Employment Growth

4.1 National policy supports employment growth within the Swansea Bay City region, and there is a requirement to align jobs with housing and infrastructure to reduce the need to travel, especially by car. Current local policy focuses on generating wealth by diversifying the economy away from public sector employment and growing a higher value knowledge economy (life sciences, technology and engineering) that offers higher skilled and better paid employment opportunities. There are a number of projects to help deliver these objectives which are likely to be continued throughout the LDP period, with initiatives such as the ongoing transformation of Swansea's Fabian Way corridor by two universities, plans for the redevelopment of the City Centre, Waterfront, Tawe Riverside Corridor and Lower Swansea Valley areas, together with new super-hospital proposals.

4.3 Between 2001 and 2011 the average property price in Swansea rose by 124.8%. The West of the County now contains some of the more expensive dwellings in South Wales, whilst the North and East of the County contain generally much lower house prices. In February 2023, the average house sale price in Swansea was £189,418 - average for Wales £215,343.

4.4 Average (median) earnings for full-time employees in Swansea stand at £593.10 per week, 6.9% higher than the previous year. This is lower than the weekly Wales average of £603.50 and UK average of £640.00. Average earnings data indicates that the Swansea median full-time figure (2022) of £30,262 is very close to the Wales average (£30,821) although both figures are below the UK average (£33,000) – in Swansea by 8.3%. Over the last year, average annual full-time earnings in Swansea rose by 4.9%, lower than Wales (+6.7% and the UK (+5.7%)

5.0 Historic/landscape setting of the area, including AONBs, conservation areas etc.

5.1 Over 50% of the County's area is identified as being of significant ecological interest. Nearly 70% of the habitats and at least 20% of species identified as being of importance for biodiversity conservation in the UK can be found in the County, and approximately 17% of the County's area is protected by designations at a European (SAC, SPA, RAMSAR) or National (SSSI, NNR) level.

5.2 The landscape is of critical importance within the County, as it provides a striking setting for the City and at least 40% of the County (the Gower AONB) is recognised

as being landscape of national importance. Most of the AONB coastline is also designated as Heritage Coast which extends for 59km. Gower attracts large numbers of visitors and tourism is very important for the local economy.

- 5.3 The County supports an extensive greenspace network, which is vital to economic, environmental and community well-being, and additional green infrastructure is needed to meet national guidance and local requirements for improving accessibility to open space. In particular improvements to linkages between open spaces, public rights of way and key destinations are needed to increase accessibility and promote physical activity.
- 5.4 The County has a proud industrial heritage and a number of historic buildings, such as castles and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. There are currently 31 Conservation Areas and 519 Listed Buildings within the County, many of which are characterised as having good authentic surviving historic features that still contribute to the distinctive, special character of the area. However, some Conservation Areas have been degraded in character due to inappropriate alterations to the external features of buildings, or new developments that are out of keeping with the character of the area. The character and size of Conservation Areas can vary greatly, from very small rural hamlets with a cluster of buildings around a church, to urban areas of buildings originally constructed for industrial and commercial purposes.
- 5.5 Most of Swansea's Conservation Areas were designated in the late 1960's and 1970's and therefore, the published documentation supporting these earlier Conservation Areas is often limited. This limits the amount of information available upon which development management decisions in Conservation Areas can be based. A programme of Conservation Areas Review is therefore underway.

6.0 Urban rural mix and major settlements.

- 6.1 The County can be broadly divided into four geographical areas: the open moorlands of the Lliw Uplands in the north; the rural Gower Peninsula in the west, containing a number of rural villages, contrasting coasts and the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); the suburban area stretching from the edge of Swansea towards settlements in the west and along the M4 corridor; and the coastal strip around Swansea Bay, which includes the City Centre and adjacent District Centres such as Sketty and Mumbles.
- 6.2 Some two-thirds of the County's boundary is with the sea - the Burry Inlet, Bristol Channel and Swansea Bay.
- 6.3 Most of the population live within the urban areas radiating from the City Centre and in the surrounding nearby urban settlements which are generally spread along the main transport corridors into the City. There are also rural / semi-rural settlements in and around the edges of Gower and to the North.
- 6.4 The regeneration of the retail heart of the City Centre through mixed use development, including the reintroduction of residential units into the central area, has been seen as a particularly important means of breathing life back into the City. There has been major investment in infrastructure and environmental improvements, and these areas are well located for access to a wide range of employment opportunities. Development has been encouraged within the Maritime Quarter, SA1 and Lower Swansea Valley riverfront areas to reinforce the image and role of Swansea as a 'Waterfront City'.
- 6.5 Within the North West part of the County, development has been concentrated on the settlements of Gorseinon, Loughor, Penllergaer and Pontarddulais in support of

regeneration initiatives and local employment centres. This has included significant levels of housebuilding over the past decade.

6.6 West Swansea was the focus for the greatest boom in post war building and is now largely built-out to its environmental limits. Beyond this area the Gower Fringe is characterised by rural and semi-rural areas, including the settlements of Penclawdd, Crofty, Dunvant, Three Crosses, Upper Killay and Bishopston, where development has historically been limited to infill and small scale rounding off. Within the Gower AONB restrictive housing policies have historically been applied, however small-scale affordable housing development required to satisfy the overriding economic or social needs of a local community is supported through LDP policy. An increasing number of dwellings are being used as holiday homes within Gower which also impacts on the availability of housing to meet affordable and local needs. Recent changes in planning legislation has resulted in new use classes for Second Homes and Short Term holiday lets. The Council will monitor the impact of these changes to see whether any additional planning controls are required to ensure the availability of housing for local needs.

7.0 Population change and influence on LDP/forthcoming revisions.

7.1 The 2021 Census reported that the usually resident population of Swansea was 238,500; approximately 500 or 0.2 per cent less than the 2011 census total, and 8,100 (-3.3%) less than the 2020 estimates. The population of Wales was 3.1m, an increase of 1.4% on the previous census. The population of England and Wales grew by 6.3% compared to the census of 2011.

7.2 The population of Swansea comprises 117,600 males and 121,000 females (Source ONS). Previous population estimates suggests that Swansea's overall population reduction was due to negative natural change (more deaths than births) and internal (UK-based) out-migration, partly offset by net international in-migration. Analysis of the data will be released throughout this year.

7.3 Table 1 below shows Swansea's 2021 Census population by Age and sex:

Table 1: Swansea's 2021 Census Population by Age and sex.

Age group	Males	Females	Total (% of all)	Wales %	Difference: 2021 vs. 2011
0-4	5,800	5,600	11,400 (4.8%)	5.0%	-1,700 (-13.0%)
5-9	6,800	6,300	13,000 (5.5%)	5.7%	+600 (+4.5%)
10-14	7,100	6,500	13,700 (5.7%)	5.9%	+500 (+3.7%)
15-19	7,600	6,900	14,500 (6.1%)	5.7%	-1,500 (-9.7%)
20-24	10,500	8,700	19,200 (8.1%)	6.0%	-1,300 (-6.4%)
25-29	7,100	7,200	14,200 (6.0%)	6.0%	-1,400 (-8.7%)
30-34	7,400	7,700	15,100 (6.3%)	6.3%	+700 (+4.9%)
35-39	7,100	7,400	14,500 (6.1%)	6.0%	-200 (-1.4%)
40-44	6,800	7,000	13,800 (5.8%)	5.6%	-2,100 (-13.4%)
45-49	6,900	7,100	14,000 (5.9%)	6.0%	-2,300 (-14.1%)
50-54	7,800	7,900	15,700 (6.6%)	6.9%	+500 (+3.6%)
55-59	7,800	8,200	16,000 (6.7%)	7.2%	+2,100 (+15.5%)
60-64	7,000	7,600	14,500 (6.1%)	6.4%	-500 (-3.2%)
65-69	6,100	6,600	12,700 (5.3%)	5.7%	+700 (+5.4%)
70-74	6,200	6,900	13,100 (5.5%)	5.8%	+3,000 (+29.6%)
75-79	4,400	5,200	9,600 (4.0%)	4.2%	+1,000 (+11.2%)
80-84	2,900	3,900	6,800 (2.9%)	2.9%	+500 (+8.5%)
85-89	1,700	2,600	4,300 (1.8%)	1.7%	+500 (+12.7%)
90+	800	1,600	2,400 (1.0%)	1.0%	+500 (+23.7%)
All ages	117,600	121,000	238,500 (100%)	100%	-500 (-0.2%)

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), © Crown copyright 2022.

Note: 2011 and 2021 figures are from the Census; 2020 figures use the latest published mid-year population estimates.

7.3 There are 11,400 children aged 0-4 in Swansea, 4.8% of the total population – lower than the equivalent proportion for Wales (5.0%) and 13% lower than the 2011 census. Swansea also has a lower percentage aged 5-14, at 11.2% (26,700 children), than

Wales (11.6%). 33,700 (14.2%) of Swansea's population are young people aged 15-24, a noticeably higher proportion than Wales (11.7%), likely in part due to students. 24.2% of the population (57,600 people) are aged 25-44, higher than the percentage for all of Wales (23.9%). 60,200 people in Swansea are aged 45-64 (25.3%), lower as a proportion than Wales (26.5%). 20.5% of Swansea's population are aged 65 and over (48,900), lower than the percentage figures for Wales (21.3%), but higher than the total for England (18.4%). 6,700 people in Swansea are aged 85 and over, 2.7% of the Swansea total; the same as the proportion in Wales (2.7%). Life expectancy at birth in Swansea now stands at 77.5 years for males (Wales 78.3) and 81.8 for females (Wales 82.1)

- 7.4 The total number of households (with residents) in Swansea in the 2021 census is estimated at 105,000, an increase of approximately 1,500 (1.4%) from the 2011 census figure. Average household size fell from 2.27 people (2010) to 2.20 people (2020). The falling average household size can be attributed to the significant rise of single-person households who now account for over a third of all households.
- 7.5 The Welsh Government's latest trend-based population projections suggest that Swansea's population will grow by 7.5% (18,400 people) between 2018 and 2043. In comparison, the projections suggest a population increase of 5.4% across Wales over the period.
- 7.6 The 2021 census indicates that Swansea had a minority ethnic group (non-white) population of around 20,400 in 2021 (approx. 8.6% of the population). In 2021, 75% of Swansea's population were born in Wales, with 22,500 (9.4%) born outside the UK.
- 7.7 The proportion of people aged 3 and over able to speak Welsh in Swansea decreased from 13.4% (28,938) in 2001 to 11.4% in 2011 (26,332 people); this fell further to 11.2% in 2021.
- 7.8 Survey data (ONS) for the year period ending December 2021 suggests that Swansea has a higher proportion of working age residents with qualifications to NVQ level 3 and above than the Wales and UK average. In the last five years (2016 to 2021), the number of Swansea's working age (16-64) residents with NVQ level 4+ has risen from 55,200 to 61,600 (up by 6,400 or 11.6%); whilst the number with no qualifications fell from 15,700 to 12,100 (-3,600 or 22.9%). This is generally in line with national trends over the period.
- 7.9 GVA (Gross Value Added) per head in Swansea stands at £23,591 (2021, ONS); which is 5.4% above the Wales level but 21.9% below the UK average. However, over the longer term (2015 to 2020), overall growth in Swansea's GVA per head was 7.7%, which is below percentage increases in West Wales & Valleys (+11.0%) and Wales (+9.7%), but above the UK (+7.2%). Over the longer term (2016 to 2021), overall growth in Swansea's GVA per head was 14.3%, which compares with increases in West Wales & Valleys (+15.3%), Wales (+14.5%) and the UK (+12.0%).
- 7.10 80.5% of Swansea's working age residents are economically active and 123,400 in employment (76.1% of working age) (year to Dec 2022, ONS), mostly in the service sectors 89.8%, with 29.6% employed in the public sector and 4.6% working in manufacturing.
- 7.11 27,000 people commute into Swansea each day (2021, ONS/WG). Most significant cross boundary flows are from Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire. 83% of Swansea residents worked within the local authority area. Active businesses in

Swansea remained unchanged between 2020 and 2021, compared to an increase of 3.6% across Wales across Wales and 1.5% in the UK.

7.12 Latest figures suggest 4.9 million people visited Swansea Bay in 2022, up from 4.79m in 2019, contributing £500m to the local economy (up from £477 million in 2019 (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model)). 1.2 million of those who visited stayed in the area. The tourism sector provides 5,200 jobs.

7.13 Swansea is forecast to see significant population growth over the next decade. The County will need new homes, additional employment opportunities and improved infrastructure and community facilities to support this level of growth and raise standards of living, while respecting the area's cultural and natural heritage.

7.14 Key influences on the LDP include:

- The need to provide for 17100 new dwellings and support 13600 new jobs,
- Limited previously developed (brownfield) land remaining to accommodate development,
- The sustainable regeneration of the Swansea Central Area as the economic hub and main driver of the 'City Region',
- The need for further investment at SA1, Tawe Riverside and the Fabian Way Corridor to sustain the successful regeneration of waterfront areas, whilst complementing regeneration of the Central Area,
- Reorientation of the economy towards high quality, skilled and knowledge-based sectors,
- Lack of available, high quality office space to meet economic growth needs,
- The impact of out-of-town development of retail, office and leisure uses on the Central Area,
- Significant opportunities for leisure, sustainable tourism and heritage-led development schemes,
- Supply of new house building not keeping pace with demand as the local population grows, a shortfall of affordable housing and the economic viability of sites for delivering new housing varying considerably across the County,
- Community cohesion issues in areas with high concentrations of HMOs,
- Need for greater variety of size and tenure mix within new housing developments to contribute towards sustainable balanced communities,
- Meeting the needs of an increasingly elderly population
- A sizeable Higher Education student population and increasing demand to provide additional accommodation,
- Significant variations across the County in terms of social indicators of deprivation, including access to health, education and community services and facilities and housing quality. Community cohesion issues in certain wards due to the number of conversions of housing stock to HMOs and the geographical spread,
- Safeguarding communities where Welsh language is an important part of the social fabric,
- The high-quality natural environment, landscapes, and coastline are important assets to the local economy, attracting visitors, and providing resources,
- The extensive green space network is vital to economic, environmental and community well-being, and more green infrastructure is needed to meet national guidance and local requirements for improving accessibility to open space,

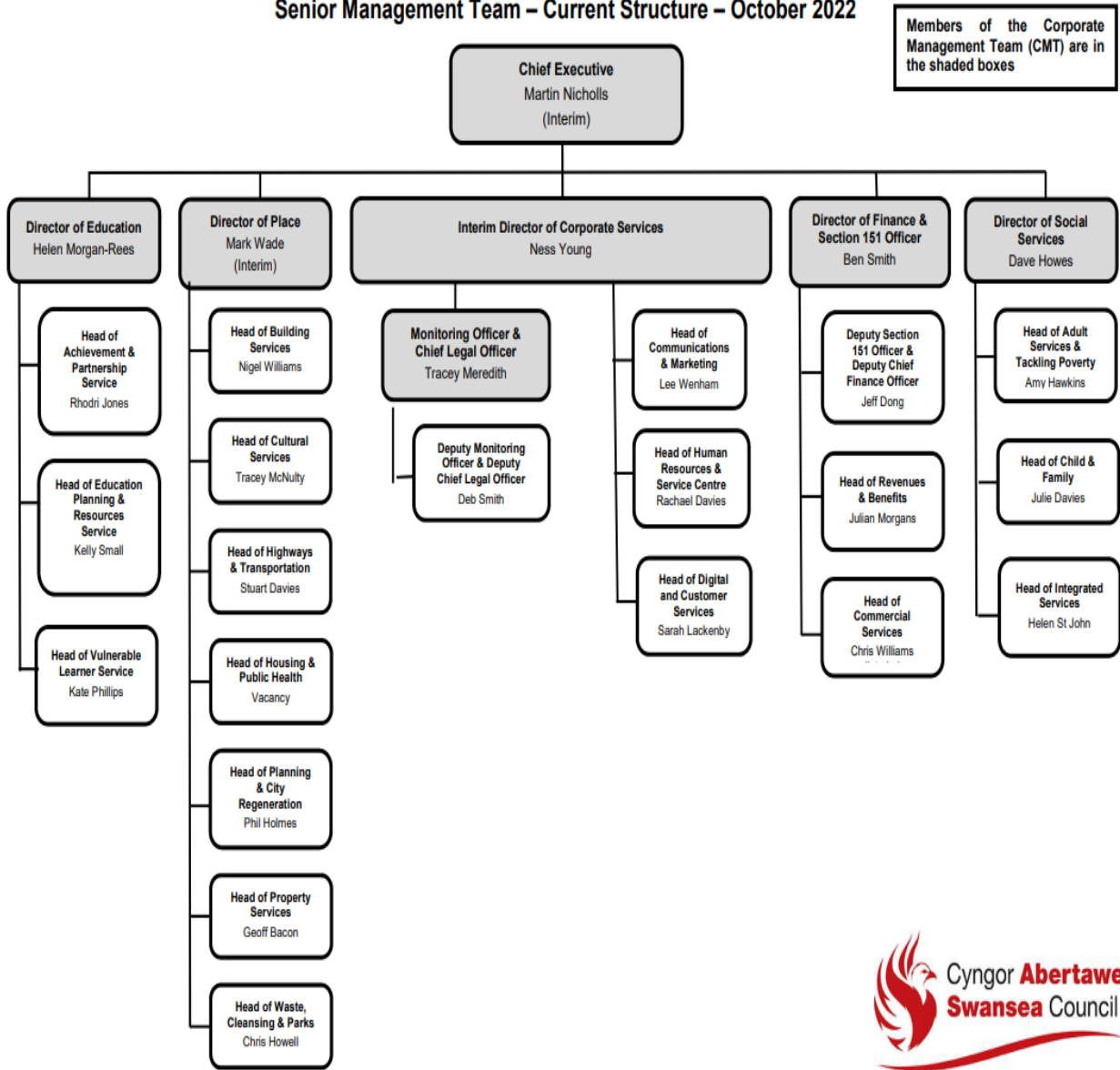
- Improvements to linkages between open spaces, Public Rights of Way, and key destinations are needed to increase accessibility and promote physical activity,
- Poor air quality is an issue in some areas, which can have a detrimental impact on human health. Parts of the urban area have been designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), where further deterioration in air quality would be of significant concern,
- The area's industrial past has left a legacy of potentially contaminated sites, where remediation is required to protect human health and well-being,
- The existing highway network experiences traffic congestion along certain main routes and junctions, which can have a negative impact on amenity, health and well-being, and economic competitiveness.

PLANNING SERVICE

- 8.1 The Council is organised into five Corporate Directorates reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer, as detailed in Chart 1 below. Both the Development Management and Placemaking & Strategic Planning functions sit within the Planning and City Regeneration Service under a single Head of Service who reports to the Director of Place.

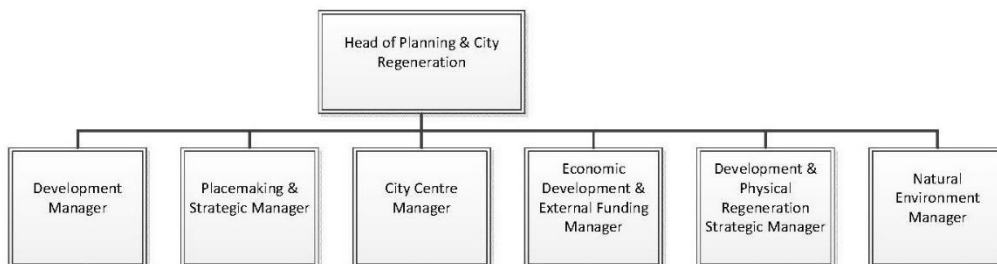
Chart 1 - Organisational Structure

Senior Management Team – Current Structure – October 2022



8.2 The Planning and City Regeneration Service is within the Place Directorate and as detailed in Chart 2 below, is organised into 6 separate service areas namely; Development Management, Placemaking and Strategic Planning, Natural Environment, City Centre Management, External Funding, and Development and Physical Regeneration.

Chart 2 – Organisational Structure



9.0 Wider organisational activities impacting on the service – how has the department responded to financial constraints imposed during budget setting? What cross departmental activities has the department been involved in or been affected by, e.g. closer joint working, IT changes, real estate rationalisation?

9.1 Agile working arrangements have been introduced as part of a corporate initiative, to facilitate the rationalisation of accommodation within the Civic Centre, income generation through the rental of office floor space and improved productivity. In this respect the Development Management function of the Authority has, since 2013, progressively introduced new document management, back office and workflow management systems together with revised and refined business processes to facilitate a paperless office that has allowed the efficiencies and benefits associated with agile working to be exploited more effectively. This work meant the when the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions were imposed in March 2020, officers were fully equipped to work from home. Officers continue to work flexibly with officers able to work both from home and in the office.

9.2 Cross departmental working initiatives include the formation of a core Land Charges Team in April 2019 embedded within the Development Management Section. This brought together discrete functions carried out by 11 separate officers in 7 different Departments under one management structure providing the potential for greater resilience, improvements in the quality of service and opportunities to generate further fee income. In March 2022, part of the Land Charges service was migrated to the Land Registry as part of a national programme. Swansea was the first Authority in Wales to migrate.

10.0 Operating budget – including budget trend over 3 years, and fee income. Does the planning department retain fee income? Is this used to calculate its operating budget? Has a discrepancy between expected fee income and actuals affected the forward planning or operational activity of the department?

10.1 The operating budget dedicated specifically to the Development Management, Placemaking and Strategic Planning and Natural Environment functions is difficult to establish as staff within the Development Management, Placemaking and Strategic Planning and Natural Environment service areas input into a range of functions including central administration for the department as a whole, rights of way, ecology and AONB functions.

10.2 In terms of Development Management, the cost of the service is heavily reliant on planning application fee income to offset the costs of the service. However, the last three years has seen a reduction in income as illustrated in Table 1 below. Whilst Welsh Government increased planning fees in August 2020, and the number of planning applications received over the period has increased from 2082 in 2018-19 to 2217 in 2022-23, there has been decrease in the amount of fees received. This is because of an increase in the number of householder applications received which generate lower application fees.

Table 1 – Planning Application Fee Income

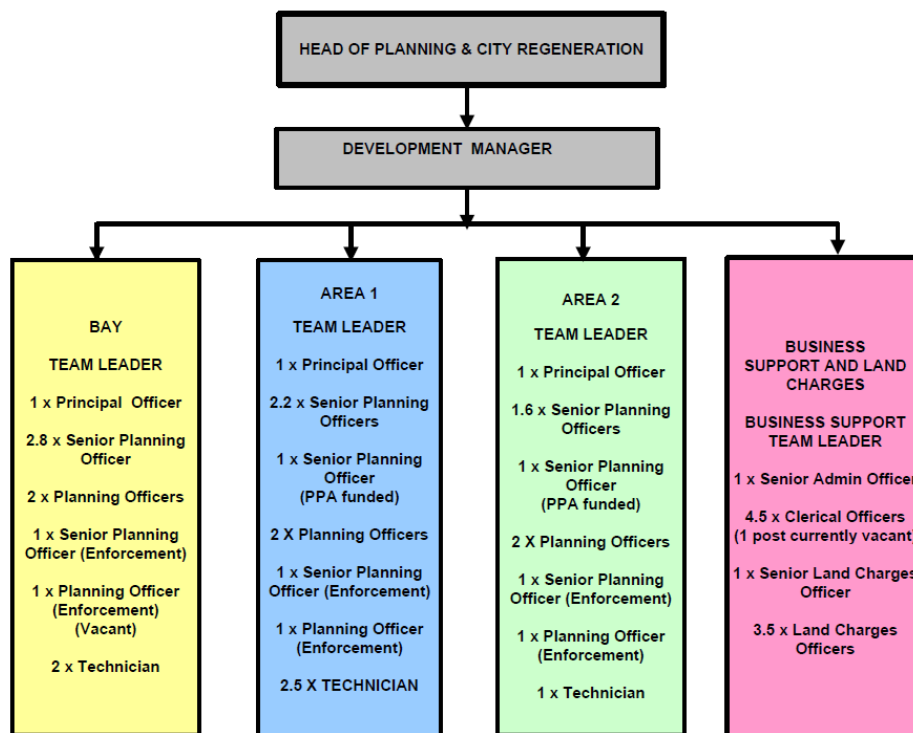
Income (£)	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Target	1,072,100	1,073,800	1,080,500	1,212,650	1,297,050
Actual	1,257,249	934,109	916,723	926,812	1,100,870

10.3 Fee income is retained within the Development Management budget which is, however, set demanding fee income targets for each financial year to cover a growing proportion of the costs of the Service. Any budget underspend at the end of the financial year is not carried forward to the following financial year. The cost of providing the service has continued to increase, but as planning application fees have not increased since 2020, the costs of providing the service are not being met through planning fee income. This places a heavy emphasis on unpredictable fee income as a means of sustaining the core business of the Service and represents a significant risk to service delivery should fee income continue to fall. Two full time Senior Planning Officer posts are currently funded by Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) monies. As things stand, there will be insufficient funds available in the PPA budget to fund the two Senior Planning Officer posts for the financial year starting April 2024. This will place additional pressures on the service.

11.0 **Staff issues – what is the current staffing level of the department? What are the current plans for staff skills development and succession planning? Are any vacancies being carried? Has the service had to manage with redundancies (with reference to budget section above)? Has a loss of skills through sickness absence or other reasons, adversely affected the department? What are the coping mechanisms for this?**

11.1 Development Management consists of 4 teams, comprising three Area Planning Teams, and a Business Support Team incorporating the Land Charges Section

Chart 4 – Development Management



11.3 The Section has previously been restructured and accommodated a number of redundancies with job descriptions rationalised to provide more flexible working. Authority has also been delegated further down the staff structure and through on the job training staff from previously discrete teams carry out a much wider range of functions. In this way the impact of redundancies and budget cuts has been managed to an extent with existing officers absorbing these roles in parallel with the introduction of revised business processes and a review of service delivery options.

- 11.4 Upskilling and reskilling of staff in this way remains an ongoing process but is a robust mechanism to manage the risk to the Service in the face of ongoing budget situation.
- 11.5 Budgetary pressures and recruitment policies have, however, generated clear resilience issues, with a contracting, ageing workforce and reliance on a small number of individual officers in key specialist fields. The Authority is increasingly having to “buy in” services to address specialism gaps.
- 11.6 During the year, a number of vacancies have arisen in the department through a combination of staff resignations, long term sickness and internal promotions. These posts have been filled but this process is lengthy, and posts remain vacant for a significant period whilst the recruitment process is ongoing. These periods of vacancies have created additional workload pressures on staff. In addition, the significant increase in the number of planning applications being submitted over the last three years, has further increases the workload pressure on staff. Temporary staff have been recruited to assist in the short term, although these posts are dependent on funding being available in the future.
- 11.7 In addition, and as stated above, two Senior Planning Officers continue to be funded via fee income generated from Planning Performance Agreements negotiated on a variety of projects. Fee income is now the primary source of funding for the service and as illustrated in Table 1 above can experience significant variations year on year placing the delivery of statutory services at potential risk moving forward. Whilst the costs of providing the service are increasing, there has been no increase in planning fees to meet these increases. The fees are set by Welsh Government at a national level and there is no scope for the Council to increase the fees. Representations have been made to Welsh Government by the Cabinet Member and officers are working with other Authorities to highlight the pressures on services with Welsh Government.

YOUR LOCAL STORY

- 12.0 Workload. What are the current planning pressures the service is facing? What is the status of the LDP? Is development/monitoring/revision proceeding as planned? What is the impact on support of development management services, e.g. for master planning? What is the DM workload per officer?**
- 12.1 Development management pressures stem from an increase in the number of planning and related applications received rising from 1482 in 2012/13 to 2088 in 2020/21 and 2390 in 2021-22. The figure dropped slightly in 2022/23 to 2217. This has had a significant impact on officer workload. The number of planning applications received per case officer (FTE) was 124 per annum in 2020-21. In 2022/23 this was 139. However, it should be noted that at various times during the year, there were vacant posts in the department which meant that in the average number of applications per officer was greater than this. This figure excludes the provision of pre-application advice, input into the change process described above, appeals, enforcement cases, corporate projects and initiatives and policy/SPG formulation.
- 12.2 The number of enforcement cases received was 462 in 2020-21 with 412 received in 2022-23, which coupled with the remnants of an historic backlog of stubborn cases continues to place pressure on the enforcement service when measured against the performance indicators introduced by Welsh Government in 2017.

Furthermore, the restrictions brought in to limit the spread of Covid 19 impacted on the speed of investigation of these complaints, and the impact of those restrictions continued to be felt during 2022-23. Enforcement officers currently carry an average caseload of 139 complaints, up from 129 in 2021-22 and 78 in 2018-19

- 12.3 Internal and statutory consultees have had capacity issues over the period. These capacity issues can have a significant impact on the provision of comprehensive and/or timely consultation responses and the efficiency of decision making.
- 13.0 Reference to the Annual Monitoring Report (as an attachment). In the absence of an AMR, the authority should report on its progress towards adoption of the LDP, and any key issues arising in the year.**
- 13.1 The LDP was adopted in February 2019 and provides a clear planning framework to address key issues facing the County. It is underpinned by an extensive and up to date evidence base. The AMR is also being considered on this agenda.
- 14.0 Current projects. Any specific items of research, best practice development or other initiatives being undertaken within the planning service. Examples could include a “development team” approach to major applications, work on a Local Development Order or process reviews.**
- 14.1 Officers meet regularly with Stakeholders to identify issues which may impact on the efficiency of the Development Management Process, including Welsh Government, Internal Departments and Developers.
- 14.2 The promotion of a development team approach lead by officers from the Council’s Development and Physical Regeneration Section (as developer and applicant), externally appointed consultants and officers in the Placemaking and Strategic Planning Team continues to be a highly effective model for the delivery of the Swansea City Centre redevelopment scheme. In development management terms roles were clearly articulated and resourced through the signing of a Planning Performance Agreement which has facilitated the efficient delivery of schemes through the pre-application process with added value and the determination of the resultant applications in a timely manner.
- 14.3 The Council has also established a Developer Forum to improve working relationships with small and medium sized housing developers (SME’s) and address issues which may be frustrating the development process. In this respect two current work streams are ongoing firstly, focussing on providing consistency between planning placemaking policy and highway adoption processes and standards and secondly, on introducing a cross department pre-application advice service which goes beyond the statutory pre-application process that exists.
- 14.4 Officers of the Development Management Team have a significant input into the Council’s ‘More Homes’ project which aims to deliver new affordable housing within Swansea.
- 15.0 Local pressures. Major applications or other planning issues having a disproportionate impact on the efficiency of the service. Could include specific development pressures, enforcement issues such as major site restoration issues, monitoring compliance of conditions with non-devolved consents (e.g. wind energy applications) or applications of national significance (e.g. LNG storage site).**

- 15.1 As detailed above a number of major and strategic sites including the redevelopment of Swansea City Centre have come forward. The approach adopted by the Authority detailed at Section 14 above has facilitated the effective delivery of a number of these sites in accordance with the “placemaking” policy objectives set out in the LDP and without formal challenge.
- 15.2 Considerable resources have, however, been dedicated to this process which has only been possible to manage, without impacting on the performance of the Development Management Service as a whole, through the appointment of staff via fee income generated by Planning Performance Agreement (PPAs). As planning applications for these strategic sites have come forward, the scope for further PPAs had reduced. Unless new proposals come forward with PPAs, it will not be possible to retain the temporary posts funded from PPA income. This will place pressure on the service as the reduction in staff set against increased workload will inevitably impact on service delivery.

16.0 Our Performance 2022-23

- 16.1 In previous years, data has been provided to Local Authorities to allow comparison of our performance and the All-Wales picture. This data has not been available since the Covid pandemic so the APR reports for the last three years have had limited comparison data. The Welsh Government has recently published planning application performance data so this report will provide comparison data where it is available.
- 16.2 Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:
- Plan making
 - Efficiency
 - Quality
 - Engagement; and
 - Enforcement.

16.3 Plan making

- 16.4 The Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in March 2019 and provides a framework for making decisions on planning applications.

16.5 Efficiency

- 16.6 In 2022-23 we determined 2052 planning applications compared to 2138 in 2021-22, 83% of which were approved. 96% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales, compared to the Wales average of 83%. The target for Wales is 80%. Table 2 below provides a comparison of Welsh Local Planning Authorities and demonstrates that our performance remained at a high level. It is noted that this performance has been achieved when dealing with a significantly higher number of applications than all Council’s in Wales except Cardiff.

Table 2 : Percentage of planning applications determined in required timescales

Welsh Local Planning Authority	Percentage determined on time	Total applications determined
Merthyr Tydfil	99.00	287
Vale of Glamorgan	98.00	1142
SWANSEA	96.00	2069
Blaenau Gwent	93.00	272
Caerphilly	93.00	929
Neath Port Talbot	92.00	668
Isle of Anglesey	89.00	800
Powys	88.00	1470
Carmarthenshire	86.00	1523
Ceredigion	84.00	811
Monmouthshire	84.00	1094
Conwy	83.00	886
Denbighshire	74.00	780
Cardiff	73.00	2393
Gwynedd	72.00	1116
Pembrokeshire	72.00	1060
Rhondda Cynon Taff	71.00	1235
Torfaen	69.00	423
Pembrokeshire Coast	67.00	623
Brecon Beacons	67.00	507
Wrexham	66.00	800
Newport	63.00	1051
Bridgend	61.00	786
Snowdonia	31.00	329
Flintshire	Incomplete Data	Incomplete Data

Source : WG Development Management Quarterly Statistics 2022/23

16.7 Welsh Government also provides data on the percentage of planning applications determined within 8 weeks (16 weeks for EIA applications). 78% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales, compared to the Wales average of 52%. Table 3 below provides a comparison of Welsh Local Planning Authorities and demonstrates that our performance was the best in Wales over the year.

Table 3 : Percentage of applications determined within 8 weeks.

Welsh Local Planning Authority	Percentage determined on time	Total applications determined
Swansea	78.00	2052
Merthyr Tydfil	76.00	287
Conwy	69.00	842
Pembrokeshire	67.00	940
Neath Port Talbot	65.00	648
Rhondda Cynon Taff	65.00	1173
Caerphilly	61.00	906
Carmarthenshire	58.00	1468
Isle of Anglesey	57.00	774
Blaenau Gwent	55.00	267
Gwynedd	54.00	981
Denbighshire	53.00	707
Brecon Beacons	51.00	487
Monmouthshire	51.00	1026
Pembrokeshire Coast	45.00	556
Cardiff	45.00	2303
Wrexham	45.00	756
Torfaen	40.00	391
Vale of Glamorgan	38.00	1124
Powys	36.00	1411
Bridgend	34.00	736
Newport	32.00	982
Ceredigion	26.00	783
Snowdonia	Incomplete Data	Incomplete data
Flintshire	Incomplete Data	Incomplete Data

Wales Average ; 52%

Source : WG Development Management Quarterly Statistics 2022/23

16.8 Major applications

16.9 We determined 21 major planning applications in 2022-23, 17 of which were in required timescales.

Table 4: Percentage of major applications determined within required timescales:

Wales 2018/19	Swansea 2020/21	Swansea 2021/22	Swansea 2022-23
68%	86%	78%	81%

16.10 The figure for 2022-23 shows an improvement on the previous year. The four applications that went over agreed timescales were all reported to committee and as a result went over the agreed timescale.

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales fell from 95% to 94%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales increased from 98% to 99.3% ; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales increased from 98% to 98.8%.

These changes reflect normal year on year fluctuations in determination timescales which can be influenced by things such as the number and type of applications being processed at a particular time and staff resources.

16.11 Quality

- 16.12 In 2022-23, Planning Committee made 33 planning application decisions, which equated to 1.6% of all planning decisions made in the year. This represents an decrease from 44 (2%) in 2021-22. This decrease is primarily due to the number of major applications submitted that met the committee threshold and also in 2021-22, some applications were reported to committee as a departure from the development plan but recommended for approval to support the economy's post Covid-recovery.
- 16.13 Planning Committee made 1 (3%) decision against officer advice. This equated to 0.04% of all planning application decisions made by the Council going against officer advice.
- 16.14 In 2022-23 we received 88 appeal decisions against our planning decisions. Of these, the Council's decision was upheld in 58 (66%) of cases, compared to 69% in the previous year. No appeals related to a committee overturn.
- 16.15 Analysis of the appeals allowed shows that the applications had been refused for the following reason:
- Visual Amenity – 24
 - Highway Safety - 1
 - Residential Amenity of neighbours– 1
 - Amenity for future occupiers- 2
 - Highways safety & residential amenity - 1
 - Inappropriate development in countryside - 1
- 16.16 Further analysis of the appeal data shows that one appeal Inspector determined 33% of the appeals for this Council, allowing 45% of the appeals. This contrasts with the remaining appeals considered by other Inspectors where only 27% were allowed.
- 16.17 The Welsh Government's target for a good Authority is 66% of appeals dismissed so the Council is still performing at this target.
- 16.18 During 2022-23 two awards of costs were granted against the Council.

16.18 Engagement

16.19 In previous years, data provided to the Council has allowed us to compare engagement with other Authorities. As this data has not been provided for the last few years, this comparison cannot be undertaken. However,

- we allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee;
- The department has maintained a phone service, albeit with reduced hours (10.30am to 3.00pm) due to long-term staff sickness. In addition, case officers have mobile phones and email so can be contacted directly by applicants and agents.; and
- we maintain an online register of planning applications and the online system allows members of the public to view applications, follow progress of the application and submit comments.

16.20 Enforcement

16.21 In 2022-23 we investigated 253 enforcement complaints, 29% of these within 84 days. In 2021-22 we investigated 218 enforcement cases, 32% within 84 days.

16.22 The slight drop in performance in 2022-23 can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the backlog created during the Coronavirus pandemic which impacted the ability of enforcement officers to investigate complaints. The backlog increased over the year following the receipt of 412 complaints in 2022-23.

16.23 The second issue relates to staff resources. The departure of a team leader during the year had an impact as other team leaders absorbed his workload until a replacement was appointed. This added to the timescale for progressing cases.

16.24 The average time taken to pursue positive enforcement action was 84.5 days in 2022-23, compared to 99 days in 2021-22.

16.25 Section 106 Agreements

16.26 Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into a legally binding agreement or planning obligation with a landowner as part of the granting of planning permission. They are used where it is considered that a development will have significant impacts on the local area that cannot be moderated by means of a planning condition attached to a planning decision.

16.27 In 2022-23, 11 planning permissions were issued subject to a S106 agreement. These agreements secured the provision of 149 Affordable Housing units and one commuted sum in lieu of affordable housing. In addition, these agreements secured the provision of the following financial contributions as shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: Planning permissions issued 2022-23 subject to S106 agreements:

Site Name	Application Number	S106 Date Signed	Fees			Financial Obligations						TOTAL FINANCIAL OBLIGATION	
			Monitoring Fee	Legal Fee	Local Land Charge	Highways	Education	Ecology	Rights of Way	Parks & Open Spaces	Public Arts		
Site Of Former Canaan Chapel, Foxhole Road, St Thomas, Swansea, SA1 8EG	2019/0001/FUL	22/03/2023	0	2,840	0	25,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	25,000
Land at 2-3 Tontine Street	2020/0059/FUL	10/05/2022	160	500	0	8,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	8,000
Land at The Strand, Swansea	2021/0867/FUL	25/04/2022	1,000	1,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Land North Of Llewellyn Road	2021/1495/FUL	01/09/2022	15,176	840	0	0	1,372,504	0	0	0	0	0	1,372,504
Land To The South West Of Beili Glas Farm	2021/1820/FUL	08/07/2022	5,872	840	0	63,500	332,200	0	0	30,000	0	0	425,700
Gellionen Ganol Farm, Gellionen Road, Clydach, Swansea	2021/1884/FUL	11/10/2022	0	500	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Land North of Rhodfa Fadog, Cwmrhydyceirw	2021/2013/S73	01/09/2022	0	500	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Land to the South side of Samlet Road, Llansamlet	2021/3182/FUL	20/09/2022	0	1,000	0	0	0	0	15,000	0	0	0	15,000
26 Eaton Crescent, Uplands	2022/0158/FUL	01/07/2022	0	840	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Land at Olchfa Comprehensive School	2022/0249/FUL	17/11/2022	2,910	1,000	0	0	844,028	0	0	0	0	0	844,028
Plots PC And PJ, Land South Of Fabian Way And East Of River Tawe, Swansea	2022/0954/RES	14/03/2023	0	840	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Totals	25,118	10,700	40	96,500	2,548,732	0	15,000	30,000	0	0	2,690,232

16.28 The trigger points for S106 agreements will vary depending on the nature of the planning application and the specific requirements of the agreement. The obligations in respect of a S106 agreement may not be required for a number of years after the grant of planning permission. In 2022-23, 206 affordable units were built as a result of requirements in S106 agreements. In addition, table 6 details the financial obligations received by the Council in 2022-23:

Table 6: Details of monies received in connection with S106 agreements 2022-23

Site Name	Site Ref	Main Beneficiary	Service Level Beneficia	Amount Du	Trigger Text in Obligation	Total Invoice Amt financ.
and At Bryn Hawddgar	2006/0650	Highways	Highways and Transportation	43,632	2013/0425: to pay Fifty per cent (50%) of Highways Contribution (1) to the Council (in its capacity as local highway authority) in respect of improvements to Gellionen Road Vadre Road and Lone Road Clydach prior to commencement of the development	60,721
and At Bryn Hawddgar	2006/0650	Monitoring Fee	Economic Regeneration and Planning	4,565	Upon commencement of Development	4,565
Rear of 702 Gower Road, Swansea, SA2 7HQ	2008/0361	Highways	Highways and Transportation	13,000	prior to Occupation of any of the dwellings	13,398
Parc Ceirw, Cymrhydyceirw Quarry	2014/0377	Education	Education	247,500	payable before the 120th Market Dwelling is Occupied	301,552
Parc Ceirw, Cymrhydyceirw Quarry	2014/0377	Highways	Highways and Transportation	30,000	Before 1st Dwelling is Occupied	33,585
and at Plot A1, SA1 Waterfront, Swansea	2016/1511	Highways	Highways and Transportation	40,000	prior to Occupation of the Student Accommodation	47,846
Jun Alliance House, 166-167 St Helens Road, Swansea, SA1 4DQ	2016/1523	Highways	Highways and Transportation	33,460	prior to the beneficial occupation of the student accommodation	50,581
Former Pines Country Club	2017/2572/FUL	Highways	Highways and Transportation	66,000	prior to commencement of development	82,403
and off George Manning Way, Gowerton, Swansea	2017/2703/FUL	Highways	Highways and Transportation	44,433	prior to the occupation of the 1st residential unit	47,007
and off George Manning Way, Gowerton, Swansea	2017/2703/FUL	Education	Education	46,674	on or before Occupation of the twenty-fifth Dwelling	43,304
Yr Ffynnon, Off Rufus Lewis Av, SA4 4XN	2018/2163/FUL	Highways	Highways and Transportation	8,131	prior to the beneficial occupation of the first dwelling on the site	8,131
and off Rhydypanyd Road and Mynydd Gelli Wastad Road, Morriston, Swansea, SA6 5SN	2018/2508/FUL	Education	Education	51,860	before the first Residential Unit is Occupied.	65,533
and North of Pennard Road HSJ, SA3 2AD	2018/2580/FUL	Education	Education	73,240	prior to the Occupation of the twenty fifth Dwelling on the Site	88,638
and at Upper Bank, Pantong Way, Pentrechrwyth, SA1 1AA	2018/2632/FUL	Education	Education	35,000	on or before Occupation of the thirtieth (30th) Dwelling.	116,676
Yrisha Farm	2018/2720/FUL	Parks	Waste, Parks and Cleansing	36,000	prior to the Occupation of the First Dwelling on Site	36,523
and at 2-3 Tontine Street, Swansea, SA1 5BP	2020/0053/FUL	Legal Fee	Legal and Democratic Services	500	On or before completion of this Deed	500
and at 2-3 Tontine Street, Swansea, SA1 5BP	2020/0053/FUL	Monitoring Fee	Economic Regeneration and Planning	160	On or before completion of this Deed	160
and at Former Russell House, 31 Russell Street, SA1 1HR, SA1 4HR	2020/2544/FUL	Highways	Highways and Transportation	15,000	Prior to the Commencement of Development	17,850
and South Of Glebe Road	2021/0112/FUL	Highways	Highways and Transportation	18,000	Prior to the occupation of the first dwelling on the Site	18,000
and at The Strand, Swansea, SA1 1SP	2021/0867/FUL	Legal Fee	Legal and Democratic Services	1,000	Upon completion of this Deed but prior to issue of the Planning Permission	1,000
and at The Strand, Swansea, SA1 1SP	2021/0867/FUL	Monitoring Fee	Economic Regeneration and Planning	1,000	On completion of this Deed	1,000
and at Llewellyn Road, Penllergaer, Swansea	2021/1435/FUL	Legal Fee	Legal and Democratic Services	840	Upon completion of this Deed but prior to issue of the Planning Permission	840
and at Llewellyn Road, Penllergaer, Swansea	2021/1435/FUL	Monitoring Fee	Economic Regeneration and Planning	15,176	On completion of this Deed	15,176
and to the South West of Beili Glas Farm, Loughor, Swansea	2021/1820/FUL	Legal Fee	Legal and Democratic Services	840	Upon completion of this Deed but prior to issue of the Planning Permission	840
and to the South West of Beili Glas Farm, Loughor, Swansea	2021/1820/FUL	Monitoring Fee	Economic Regeneration and Planning	5,872	Upon completion of this Deed	5,872
26 Eaton Crescent, Uplands, Swansea, SA1 9QL	2022/0158/FUL	Legal Fee	Legal and Democratic Services	840	Upon completion of this Deed but prior to issue of the Planning Permission	840
and at Olchfa Comprehensive School, Aneurin Close and Aneurin Way, Sketty, Swansea	2022/0243/FUL	Legal Fee	Legal and Democratic Services	1,000	Upon completion of this Deed but prior to issue of the Planning Permission	1,000
				305,730		1,070,153

16.29 When financial contributions are received by the Council, there is a requirement that the monies have to be spent for the purpose specified in the S106 agreement within 5 years of receipt of the final payment. Table 7 demonstrates the monies that have been transferred to the relevant departments for spending:

Table 7: Details of monies requested by other departments for spending

Site Name	Application Number	Main Beneficiary	Service Level Beneficiary	Contribution Text in Obligation	Amount Allocated (including Indevation)	Allocated Date
New Cut Road	2007/2829	Parks/Open Space/Leisure	Waste, Parks and Cleansing	Children's Play Area Contribution" means a sum not exceeding seventy thousand pounds (£70,000) as a contribution towards the costs to be incurred by the Council in providing a children's play area on land adjacent to the Site	£84,000	17/05/2022
Mariner Street	2016/0556	Highways	Highways and Transportation	To pay the Pedestrian Crossing Works Contribution to the Council prior to Commencement of Development.	£36,875	06/06/2022
Mariner Street	2016/0556	Environmental Health	Housing and Public Protection	To pay the Air Quality Monitoring Contribution to the Council prior to the beneficial Occupation of the Student Accommodation in order to measure the air quality impact on the student population and users of the proposed commercial units.	£8,987	07/09/2022
SA1 Plot A1	2016/1511	Highways	Highways and Transportation	Highway Infrastructure Contribution: the sum of £99,000 towards the cost of the following works; a.At the Fabian Way / King's Rd junction - relocation of the Fabian Way pedestrian crossing phase to a more conventional location to the East side of the junction in order to improve pedestrian connectivity. b.At the Fabian Way / King's Road junction - Introduction of bus priority for buses exiting King's Road through the use of pole mounted card reader, to enact priority call for buses serving SA1 In order to Improve public transport. c.Amendments to inbound Fabian Way bus lane through removal of the dedicated bus stage, and remodel the Island to create a give way arrangement to allow buses to reach the front of the queue in order to Improve public transport. d.At the Eastbenk Way / Delhi St Junction - modifications to triangular island In centre of junction to allow vehicles from Second Tawe bridge to progress towards Fabian Way when right turn link Is full in order to Improve public transport	£102,341	23/01/2023
Land North of Pennard Rd	2018/2580	Education	Education	to pay the remaining fifty per cent (50%) of the Education Contribution prior to the Occupation of the twenty fifth Dwelling on the Site	£88,638	13/06/2022
					£320,841	