



Council – 25 January 2024

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1	<p>Councillors Peter Black, Sam Bennett and Wendy Fitzgerald</p> <p>How will the Council ensure that the public are informed of the association between Cupid Way and Cyril Cupid.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities</p> <p>Cupid Way has several interpretation panels against the development site adjacent explaining the link of the name to the athlete Cyril Cupid. These will remain in-situ until such time as the development is complete and all units occupied, when we will explore ways with regeneration colleagues, tenants and via the prospective digital screens, to have information available, including via QR codes to link in the address with the history of the character for which it's named. Going forward, we are also in the process of scoping out a 'heritage' trail of events, individuals, buildings and places of significance in the city that supports the telling of the 'Swansea Story' as an online resource, linking with the Blue Plaque scheme, with funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund Culture and Tourism Anchor. This will enable tools such as QR codes and other plaques to be included in recommended trails and we can link the Cyril Cupid/Cupid Way story into this. There are also existing resources that provide information should it be sought out, including the Cabinet report into our place making/collections/naming opportunities, following the Council's Motion in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign of 2020 and the social media, website and press releases around the opening of the Arena and walkway, which was attended by Cyril Cupid's family.</p>
2	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member provide us with an update on the investment made in the purchase of the former Debenhams store.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>The council completed on the acquisition of the former Debenhams Unit within the Quadrant at the end of March 2023. The total as per completion statement for this is £3,157,750.</p> <p>In addition to the completion sum, professional fees covering valuation, building reports, conveyancing and professional advice has amounted to £98,209. Costs for roof repairs have also been incurred totalling £9,800.</p> <p>Welsh Government support of £4.5m has been secured to support the acquisition and redevelopment works.</p>

3	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member provide us with the total capital expenditure so far spent on the Swansea Arena.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>The capital expenditure for the Swansea Arena is £46,170,544.</p> <p>The project is being jointly funded by the Council, Welsh Government and UK Government as part of the wider £1.3bn Swansea Bay City Deal investment in the region.</p>
4	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member provide us with the total expenditure on the schools' capital programme since 2019 (with a breakdown of direct Council expenditure and external grants i.e. Welsh Government). Has any school's capital work been moved back in the capital programme during this period, including any that is planned to be moved backwards from 2023/24 and 2024/25.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning</p> <p>The total expenditure on the schools' capital programme since 2019 (with a breakdown of direct Council expenditure and external grants i.e. Welsh Government) is below. The figures include, all expenditure including Band B of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, Universal Free School Meals, Additional Learning Needs, and Community Focussed Schools grants, Welsh medium grants, Flying Start expenditure and capital maintenance. The funding split for the current financial year will not be available until after year end.</p> <p>The profiled expenditure in the capital programme is based on anticipated project timelines at that time. These are subject to change, affected by the length of the pre-construction phase project development. This can vary depending on the outcomes of surveys and investigations, design complexities, resourcing issues and the approvals process. They also include assumptions around the length of the construction phase which is not certain until a contractor is on board. Consequently, slippage has occurred. Looking forward there is no planned slippage, although this cannot, for the same reason, be ruled out. The current status of the pipeline projects in the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme was outlined in the Quality In Education (QEd) / The Sustainable Communities for Learning Strategic Outline Programme - Band B Cabinet Report of the 21 September 2023.</p>

Schools Capital Programme			
	£000	£000	£000
Financial Year	Total Spend	Council Funding	External Funding
2019-20	11,162	3,571	7,592
2020-21	26,733	2,885	23,848
2021-22	19,351	3,978	15,373
2022-23	10,001	3,909	6,093
2023-24 (to Nov-23)	2,786		
	70,033	14,342	52,906

5 Councillors Sam Bennett, Mary Jones and Lynda James

As we work to improve air quality in our communities there have been concerns raised about the use of diesel generators for events such as the Waterfront Wonderland. What assessments and monitoring are undertaken to understand the air quality impact of these.

Response of the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services & Performance and Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism

We appreciate and share your concerns and frustrations with the use of diesel generators at temporary events. Unfortunately, events of this nature often require access to a significant amount of temporary power in locations where access to mains power, of sufficient capacity isn't readily available – as is currently the case in the city centre and at Museum Park where the Waterfront Winterland attraction is currently operating.

With this in mind, a number of steps are taken to minimise the impact wherever and whenever possible:

- Where access permits, mains electricity is always utilised. Even if it is to supply power for part of the activity, but in all cases we work with Environmental Health to also look at siting, acoustic mitigation measures and orientation for the exhaust fume etc.
- When generators are required, event contractors/suppliers are urged to use 'green' diesel (HVO fuel) where possible. HVO or Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil is one of several renewable biofuel alternatives to fossil fuel diesel that have emerged in recent years.
 1. HVO is manufactured from 100% renewable and sustainable waste-derived raw materials
 2. Switching from diesel to HVO brings up to a 90% net reduction in greenhouse gas CO2 emissions
 3. HVO is accepted by the UK Government as a renewable fuel.
 4. Unfortunately, It is not yet possible to force contractors to only use HVO fuels as this is still a developing market and availability cannot always be guaranteed
- Switching off some or all of the generators when not in use (e.g. overnight)
- Ensuring only newer more efficient, well-maintained generators are used

Please rest assured that this is an area where we are striving to make improvements but, as with all things of this nature, change is not going to happen overnight. However, it is important to recognise that improvements are being made

wherever possible and a good example of this is in relation to the provision of temporary power at this year's Wales Airshow which was all supplied from the mains grid or via generators powered by HVO fuels.

In the longer term, discussions are ongoing about increasing the availability and access to renewable mains supplies.

With reference to monitoring to understand the air quality impact due to the use of temporary generators, the Council does not actively undertake air quality monitoring of generators as part of its Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) duties. For example, the air quality objectives, set out for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), are an annual mean of 40ugm⁻³ and an hourly mean of 200ugm⁻³ (not to be exceeded more than 18 times in the year). The relevant population exposure must be taken into account.

In the occurrence of a temporary generator, the hourly air quality objective would be the metric of interest but given that the generators are located with the implementation of screening mitigation and the orientation of exhaust, air quality monitoring is not undertaken at temporary installations.

6 Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery

Please can the Cabinet Member provide us with an update on the following:

- How many people are currently in temporary accommodation.
- How many new homes have been provided to tenants by the Council since 2021.
- How many new Council properties have been built by the Council to house tenants since 2021.
- How many properties have been purchased on the open market by the Council since 2021 to house tenants.
- How many properties have been converted by the Council into homes for tenants since 2021.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

- As at 5.1.24, there are 287 households in temporary accommodation, this equates to 378 people. This includes B&B, hotel and Council owned temporary accommodation units.
- Since 2021 the council has let the following properties to tenants:

2023/24	704 to date
2022/23	983
2021/22	1146

** This includes lettings to applicants and tenant transfers.*

We are unable to say how many new built properties have been let to transferring tenants since 2021 as we do not hold this information.

- Since 2021, 70 new homes have been built and let by the council.
- Since 2021 the Council has purchased 133 new homes to let to tenants and applicants.
- Since 2021, 19 units of accommodation have been created to let to tenants and applicants.

7	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>How many electric vehicles have been purchased/leased by the Council since 2020 and how many are in active use on a daily basis.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>The Council has purchased/leased 63 battery electric vehicles since 2020 and now has 103 battery electric and 13 hybrids in total. All are used regularly by the respective front line services and the majority of the usage patterns are no different to the previous diesel equivalents that the battery electric vehicles replaced.</p>
8	<p>Councillors Sam Bennett, Chris Holley and Sue Jones</p> <p>Will the Cabinet outline what efforts are being undertaken to remove plastics from the River Tawe at Trafalgar bridge before they go out to sea.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance</p> <p>Swansea Council's Marina employs a cleaner on a part time basis. In addition to building cleaning duties, they also cleanse the Marina waters and the impounded waters of the River Tawe when needed. The Cleaner dedicates about 25% of their working time to cleansing the Marina and impounded waters. The waters are cleansed using a small workboat and any debris is collected by hand using a rake and is placed into large bins for separation into various waste streams, including plastics, before disposal.</p> <p>The River Tawe is a mixed bag in terms of responsibilities. Swansea Council is responsible for the impounded waters immediately above the Tawe Barrage, and the waters upstream of this are the responsibility of Natural Resources Wales. Rubbish accumulations tend to occur during periods of bad weather combined with higher than normal river levels due to either rainfall or tidal overtopping of the Barrage. The higher than normal water level causes debris lying on the river banks to become waterborne, and the natural flow of the river and the fact the Barrage is a choke point means that the debris accumulates in the impounded waters immediately above the Barrage. The final position of the accumulations is then determined primarily by wind direction. It should perhaps be noted that the majority of debris is likely to enter the water somewhere in the miles and miles of upstream river that is not under Swansea Council control. Unfortunately the nature and position of the Barrage means that the vast majority of debris gets stuck in this location.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
9	<p>Councillors Keving Griffiths, Gordon Walker and Jeff Jones</p> <p>What is the cleaning regime for our multi storey city centre car parks and when were the stairways last cleaned.</p>

	<p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The car parks are litter picked daily on weekdays. They are also litter picked at weekends if sufficient volunteers make themselves available for weekend overtime. The stairwells are jet-washed fortnightly unless a service request is received with a particular issue, they were last completed on 15th December.</p>
10	<p>Councillors Sam Bennett, Michael Locke and Peter Black</p> <p>In January 2023 there was an article in Wales Online outlining states of disrepair in the flats on Heol Gwrosydd (near the Penlan Club). What action has been taken to remedy the situation and what action is going to be taken to avoid this situation in future for our council tenants.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>Housing staff continue to have a significant presence in this area, undertaking regular tenancy and estate management visits, responding to issues of concern, undertaking welfare checks, offering support etc.</p> <p>Officers from the North Area Housing Office will also visit tenants in their homes following reports and treatment of damp and mould to offer appropriate advice including signposting to cost-of-living support where appropriate.</p> <p>There is 1nr live disrepair claim currently being reviewed and a further two that have been settled and repair works awaiting execution in relation to the 7 identical blocks of flats at Heol Gwrosydd and Heol Emrys</p> <p>The caretaking team are in the area daily and will remove any items which have been fly-tipped and carry out litter picking. Any reports of rubbish within the communal areas of the blocks would be reported to and cleared by the caretaking team. Officers from Housing also work closely with the Waste and Recycling teams to promote and encourage appropriate waste management and recycling habits.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Support Unit (NSU) undertake regular patrols of the area as well as providing a response service to reported instances of anti-social behaviour. There have been reports of youth annoyance and drug use within the blocks in recent months; Housing staff work in partnership with the police in relation to such incidents although quick resolutions are not always achievable. Recent engagement events have been held in this area with other events planned. Officers from Community Safety and partners including the police are often involved in such engagement events.</p> <p>In the immediate period before the press article in Walesonline, each of the seven blocks were fitted with new security voice entry door systems to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour. There are other planned cyclic maintenance works scheduled in this current financial year's programme which are due to start at the flats within the next few weeks. The works include servicing all windows, repairs prior to painting, redecoration of internal communal areas of each block, external redecoration of claddings and handrails, renewing roof outlets, cleaning out rainwater goods and clearing and jetting all foul and surface water gullies. It is anticipated these works will be completed before the end of March 2024.</p>

11	<p>Councillors Lynda James, Mike Day and Cheryl Philpott</p> <p>Many of the roadside speed signs have been daubed with grey paint, making them unusable in another location. How many signs have been spoilt and what is the value of them. Why were they not just removed.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The paint used can be washed off, all signs taken down, which are in good condition, can be repurposed.</p> <p>The choice to spray out, rather than remove was designed to make best of available resources on and around the 17th September. It also enabled the retention of existing 20mph signs as a reminder of the prevailing limit in that initial period.</p>
12	<p>Councillors Lynda James, Mary Jones and James McGettrick</p> <p>Does Swansea Council know how many empty domestic private properties there are in Swansea and how does it ascertain these numbers. What are the numbers and how many homes have been successfully brought back into habitation over the past 5 years.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>The Council prepares the figures from 1st April each year via reports from the council tax system and the annual empties mailshot takes place in April/May to owners of empty properties.</p> <p>As of 1st April 2023, the total number of privately owned empty dwellings in Swansea is 3396 (of which 2,052 have been empty for longer than 6 months & 1,302 have been empty for longer than 12 months)</p> <p>This information is obtained from Council Tax data.</p> <p>The number of homes that have been successfully brought back into habitation over the past 5 years:</p> <p>2022 /2023 = 75 2021 /2022 = 96 2020 /2021 = 110 2019 /2020 = 115 2018 /2019 = 100 Total = 496</p>
13	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Kevin Griffiths and Jeff Jones</p> <p>What is the number of people directly employed by the Council in the operation of waste collection and what is the number of agency staff working there.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>There are 120 staff directly employed for domestic and commercial waste collections.</p> <p>Some agency staff are used to cover temporary fluctuations in work demand, such as garden waste in the summer, and temporary vacancies due to staff turnover,</p>

	<p>whilst the majority are required to cover absences such as holidays and sickness, as a full complement of staff is required each collection day.</p> <p>The number of agency staff varies from day to day dependent upon need, with the week day average for 2023 being 31.7 agency staff.</p>
14	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Peter Black and Mike Day</p> <p>Will the Leader confirm when the multi storey car park opposite the Arena will be available for use by the public.</p> <p>Response of the Leader</p> <p>At present there are various technical surveys currently being undertaken to ascertain the full scope of works required to complete the car park. This work will then inform the detailed design and procurement of the physical works packages with contracts then awarded and commencement thereafter. All work is being undertaken as quickly as possible and a further update will provided when the surveys have been completed and the scale and scope of the remedial works is known.</p>
15	<p>Councillors Jeff Jones, Chris Holley and Peter Black</p> <p>To balance the Council budget in 2023/2024, £8million was taken from school reserves. How was the figure apportioned against each school as a contribution to make up this figure.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning</p> <p>Schools reserves are not, and have not, been taken by the council to balance its budget.</p> <p>However, it is clear schools' funding was redirected from education to children's services by the previous administration when Swansea's children's services went into special measures.</p> <p>Figures for schools reserves, per school are shown in the attached table. The draw from each school's reserve is influenced by the spending plan set by each individual governing body. Swansea's overall school reserve position remains at the higher end when compared to others in Wales, as per published statistics Reserves held by schools: as at 31 March 2023 GOV.WALES</p> <p>These figures show that good progress has been made by Swansea schools in reducing record Swansea school reserves from a high of £28m in 2022 to £20m in 2023. Further draws are expected to have been made since April 2023 but Swansea schools are expected to retain one of the highest levels of reserves in Wales.</p> <p>It should be noted that school reserves are not evenly spread across the schools estate.</p>
16	<p>Councillors Mary Jones, Nicola Furlong and Jeff Jones</p> <p>Many older people have dogs which they walk in Singleton Park. Will the Cabinet Member reconsider allowing dogs on leads in the Botanical Gardens as they are now allowed in Swansea Market.</p>

	<p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism</p> <p>The Botanics contain precise gardens which have specialist flowers and formal planting that requires technically proficient planning and maintenance. If these gardens are disrupted by just one dog running loose it can cause considerable damage and result in plant die off which affects all visitors and is not recoverable in that season.</p> <p>Although the majority of dog owners are responsible and would keep their dogs on leads there have been historical issues where a minority of others who are not so considerate of the location, despite signage and challenges, left their dogs running off the lead and caused damage.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that the minority affects the majority however the risk of damage that can be caused by a single loose dog is considered too great. Dog walkers do have the remainder of the wonderful Singleton Park to use for dog walking.</p>
17	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>In the Scrutiny Programme Committee of 19th December (YouTube 54:45) the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration Events and Tourism when referring to Swansea City Centre stated that: “Our footfall is up”.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How is footfall in the city centre actually measured. b. Which dates are being used as a comparison. <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism</p> <p>Digital footfall counters are located in the City Centre in 2 key locations (i.e. the junction of Oxford St and Princess Way and the junction of Wind St and St Marys St). Counters are also in situ at the entrances to the Market and Quadrant Shopping Centre.</p> <p>This information is sent to an online platform that collates the data and enables it to be interrogated for analysis. It allows comparisons to be drawn by location and timeframe including hour by hour, week by week and year on year.</p> <p>The statement made by the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism reflects a steady increase in City Centre footfall as part of the post Covid recovery process.</p>
18	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>In the Scrutiny Programme Committee of 19th December (YouTube 55:30) the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration Events and Tourism stated that: “When I look at 71/72 The Kingsway, due to open sort of May time, that I think that will be probably 100% let when it comes in. I think the rentals are going the right way”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What percentage of rental occupancy has actually been secured. b. Will any of the rental occupancy be for council employees and if so what percentage.

	<p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism</p> <p>The Council has provisionally agreed Heads of Terms on 46% of the total lettable Net internal area and meaningful discussions are ongoing between the letting agents and potential tenants for a further 36%. There are no current proposals for Council employees to have exclusive occupation of any accommodation at the building, there is provision for limited use of some meeting rooms as part of one the provisional agreements.</p>
19	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>When trying to locate a phone number to have a conversation with a council officer a couple of methods can be used. A phone number can either be displayed in the body of the officer's email signature or it can be found using the officer's information in Outlook. A growing number of these phone numbers are now obsolete or non-functional.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is the relevant Cabinet Member aware of this issue. b. Why is it happening. c. What is being done to improve matters. <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance</p> <p>We are aware a number of officer phone numbers have changed and not been updated therefore an exercise began last autumn asking all staff to review and update phone numbers on the directory. This is an ongoing process alongside new work underway as part of the Digital Transformation programme. The Improving Customer Access project is implementing new technology solutions over the next eighteen months that will make it quicker and easier to access officers and all the contact centres.</p>
20	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy and Allan Jeffery</p> <p>An article dated 27th December on Wales Online https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/welsh-council-looking-make-staff-28354917 headlines: "Welsh council looking to make staff work from home more often". Its opening line states: "Bridgend Council has decided to adopt a permanent hybrid working policy for the majority of its staff, it has been announced. The move will now see most of the local authorities staff working from home or in a range of buildings during their working week, following the success of an interim policy that was put in place in October 2022." The report highlighted how staff members had been largely positive about the plans with 72% of those who were asked saying they were satisfied with them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is Swansea Council's stance on home working. b. Does the council believe that it improves or decreases the efficiency of services. <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance</p> <p>a. The Council supports hybrid working arrangements where appropriate for the service being delivered, recognising that business need will take precedence. Each service area has an approved set of principles to support their operational working</p>

arrangements which includes hybrid working. These principles were approved by Cabinet in October 2022 and were reviewed in November 2023.

b. There are efficiencies to be gained from an element of home working – accommodation strategies and asset management plans can reflect the reduction of required office space, energy costs can reduce and the impact of commuting on both congestion and emissions is reduced. Time spent parking and travelling to multiple sites is not wasted with the efficient use of Teams as an alternative. The Council's hybrid working principles acknowledge that there are risks – skills development, team working and isolation, all of which are covered in the service area operational working arrangements and mitigated wherever possible. Should any evidence of decreasing efficiency or performance emerge, operational plans are sufficiently flexible to amend the balance of hybrid and workplace attendance.