



**To/
Councillor Rob Stewart
Cabinet Member for Economy and
Strategy**

BY EMAIL

*Please ask for:
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:
Llinell Uniongyrchol:*

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*Date
Dyddiad:*

Overview & Scrutiny

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31st January 2019

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy. The Panel met on 15th January 2019. This letter relates to the Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report 2018/19 and the Sustainable Swansea - Fit For The Future: Budget Proposals 2019/20 – 2022/23.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

On the 15th January 2019 the Panel met to discuss the Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report 2018/19 and the Sustainable Swansea - Fit For The Future: Budget Proposals 2019/20 – 2022/23.

The Panel are grateful to all officers who attended to provide information and answer questions.

The Panel do have some thoughts and observations to share with you.

Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report 2018/19

It is encouraging reading the summary charts that 64% of the indicators were met in the second quarter, with 53% showing improvement compared to quarter 2 last year.

Safeguarding

We heard how there has been an increase in the number of looked after children (CFS18). This is a 14% growth when compared to the same time last year. This is the highest percentage since records 2016/17. We would like to know why this figure has increased so much and what plans are in place to deal with this.

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Education

We heard how the majority of indicators improved their target. However the quarter 2 primary school attendance figures are the lowest quarter 2 figures since records started in 2014/15 (EDU016a).

Tackling Poverty

We heard how the processing of new Housing and Council Tax benefit claims has improved but due to some increases in work generated by the DWP, time to process changes in circumstances is still high against historical data (HBCT101B).

Transformation and Future Council

The percentage of identified forecast General Fund Revenue savings and income for the year compared to the originally approved budget (FINA6) is still flagged as a red risk. We heard how performance is weaker than the figures suggest. The Panel will continue to monitor this throughout their work.

It was explained that staff sickness is still an ongoing issue with the highest quarter 2 results since records started in 2015/16. (CHR002).

Sustainable Swansea - Fit For the Future: Budget Proposals 2019/20 – 2022/23

We will look at the specific budget proposals in the formal budget scrutiny meeting in February, however the Panel wanted to review the draft proposals to have a more thorough input.

We heard how there is an extra £1.5m revenue and some extra benefits on capital but the Teachers' Pay Award and Teachers Pension Funding are substantial pressures.

We were told that the overspend still remains 'sticky' with the long term costs of capital financing continuing to grow. With the General Reserves at the minimum considered safe the overspending risks are material.

We feel that with the continuation of austerity on local authorities, we will need to look at how we maintain core services with a sustainable budget. It is important to recognise the impact of the cuts on the current function of the Council and how this may look in the near future.

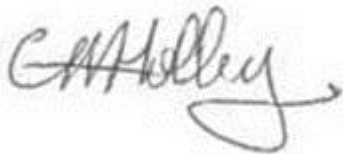
We plan on looking at the individual savings proposals at the budget meeting on 12th February 2019 and will feedback on these after the meeting.

Could you please respond to the following questions;

1. We heard how there has been an increase in the number of looked after children (CFS18). This is a 14% growth when compared to the same time last year. This is the highest percentage since records 2016/17. We would like to know why this figure has increased so much and what plans are in place to deal with this.
2. Could you please provide some clarity on how we achieve a sustainable budget going forward?

This letter seeks a response by 21st February 2019.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'CHolley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
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