



**To/
Councillor Rob Stewart,
Cabinet Member for Economy,
Finance & Strategy (Leader)**

BY EMAIL
cc: Cabinet Members

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Scrutiny

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SPC/2021-22/11

19 January 2022

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member following the Committee meeting on 18 January 2022. It is about the proposed Cabinet decision on Covid Recovery and Investment. A response is not required.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

Pre-decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Report: Covid Recovery and Investment

The Scrutiny Programme Committee met on 18 January 2022 to consider the report that you intend to present and recommend to Cabinet on 20 January. We thank you and other Cabinet Members and Officers for attending the meeting to present the report and answer questions.

Your Cabinet report relates to progress with Covid recovery and approval of future plans and investment proposals. It highlights challenges, risks, and issues regarding specific projects within the work streams. We understood that the range of issues reported on were all linked to the Council's Recovery & Transformation Plan 'Swansea – Achieving Better Together', hence presented under the umbrella of Covid Recovery and Investment.

We are writing to confirm our views on the proposed decision for Cabinet to consider before making a decision.

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The Cabinet report includes proposed decision to:

- authorise a new £2m scheme onto the capital programme for the data centre move from the Civic Centre to the Guildhall, to deliver Digital Strategy objectives with the appropriate use of cloud services for resilience and solutions which will continue to support agile and hybrid working in the longer term. We note from the report that:
 - The Guildhall would provide a stable location and resource where Digital Services can plan future networking and infrastructure requirements for the long term.
 - It is anticipated the relocated data centre can reduce the footprint of the original space by around 60% of its current size. This in turn will reduce the energy costs and the carbon footprint to maintain the controlled environment required to protect the Council's vital ICT systems.
- approve a revised plan and timeline for the implementation of the Oracle programme together with further investment of £3,620,412. We note that the earlier Cabinet decision in Sep 2019 on the Oracle system upgrade was impacted by Covid, requiring pause and re-plan (agreed by Cabinet in November 2020), and that go-live is now planned for October 2022.
- allocate £2.05m of Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) monies for the purpose of enhanced play facilities and skate park facilities across the Council area, as a new capital budget.

Your report also provides information about spending of £3,161,000 on Social Care to deal with pressures / meet identified need, up to the end of March 2022, following award of Social Care Recovery Grant in Sep 2021.

A number of questions were asked at the meeting which were responded to, relating to concerns around:

- The delay to the implementation of the Oracle upgrade and impact on the programme and costs. We understood the reasons for the delay to the programme and consequential financial implications. It was clarified to us that the £3.62m investment was in addition to previous budget for the programme of £4.8m therefore would represent a total spend of just under £8.5m – an unavoidable increase but a figure that would not be expected to rise further.
- The resilience of our digital infrastructure and IT systems. We were told that the Oracle system remained the last in a series of necessary upgrades and that all major / critical corporate systems were as robust as they can be, with resilience and recovery / continuity plans in place.

- Method for the proposed investment in Skate Park Facilities across the Council area. We noted the proposed allocation of £0.5m to assess and improve Skate Park facilities across Swansea, filling gaps in provision where identified. We were told that a survey of existing facilities was being carried out by officers and that in due course interest would be invited from local councillors regarding facilities, but that a strategic approach would be taken to ensure effective use of funds, with facilities where there is clear demand for them. It was suggested to you that the feasibility of a mobile facility be included in any options appraisal which could be shared by areas across the city and county, which you were happy to take forward in discussions.
- Assumptions about the longer-term of the continuation of home working beyond the pandemic, and the implications for the Council in terms of future office space and associated costs. We heard that the likely future for Council staff was a hybrid of office / workplace environment and home working where appropriate, and continuation of investment in agile working. However, you told the Committee that evidence points to strong demand for dedicated office space as we emerge from the pandemic and lifting of restrictions; and looking at private sector investments would suggest a resurgence of office working.

Committee Feedback

In the time available to review your report and ask questions, the Committee had no significant issues with the proposed Cabinet decision. As such, I do not intend to attend the Cabinet meeting on Thursday to speak, however please acknowledge the feedback from scrutiny as contained in this letter.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter helpful. No response is required.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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