



**Council – 11 July  
(Deferred from 6 June 2024)**

## **Councillors' Questions**

### **Part A – Supplementaries**

1	<p><b>Councillors Mike White, Fiona Gordon, Lesley Walton &amp; Wendy Lewis</b></p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation confirm the timetable, for delivery of the Croft Street highrise refurbishment.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</b></p> <p>The Croft Street scheme is progressing with the appointed contractor finalising the detailed designs and preparing costs which are scheduled for completion and agreement in October 2024. The contractor will be setting up site and undertaking some early preparatory work between October and December with the refurbishment work beginning early 2025. The scheme is expected to take between 18 to 20 months to complete. The scheme is expected to deliver major improvements to the flats and the immediate environment, making it a more attractive area to live.</p>
2	<p><b>Councillor Chris Evans</b></p> <p>I note with some alarm from a previous meeting that we might not be upholding the highest standards of scrutiny of companies wishing to sponsor corporate events. The answers at that meeting and some of the comments came across as if we would take money off any organisation regardless of their actions. I assume that this wasn't the intention. My considerable experience of dealing with greenwashing means I am all too aware of the way in which companies try to sanitise poor reputations through gifts and event sponsorship essentially buying good PR while continuing to act poorly. Would the Leader like to confirm that we will ensure that we will not allow the likes of climate criminals, oil firms, or arms companies to sponsor corporate events in Swansea and that we uphold the high standards of probity in these matters that our residents deserve.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader</b></p> <p>We understand the terminology of 'criminals' in this question to refer to those agencies, companies or organisations operating on a global platform who have broken the law concerning human rights or the environment and confirm this would not be acceptable partnership funding. Any uncertainty over this would be referred to Members and our Legal Team.</p> <p>To confirm the process as current, Sponsorship for Events is secured in collaboration between Cultural Services and the Commercial team, who apply due diligence in developing commercial sponsorship packages and best forms of approach to potential sponsors, in line with the council's advertising and sponsorship</p>

	<p>protocols. Agreeing sponsorship is a process of dialogue on value and impacts and an assessment of compatible ‘markets’ and core messages for both the Council’s and the potential sponsor’s brands. It is a proactive process, rather than reactive, hence our sponsorship is from agencies or companies that have a strong presence in Swansea, and whose reputation is compatible with the Council’s priorities.</p>
3	<p><b>Councillors Chris Holley, Mike Day, Cheryl Philpott, Michael Locke, James McGettrick &amp; Nicola Furlong</b></p> <p>Can the Leader explain why in a report to both Cabinet and the Regional City Deal Board a bid by Swansea University to look at building a Sports Village contained the whole of King George V playing fields at Ashleigh Road. but the reports have said there is no legal issues with the project.</p> <p>But the playing fields are list in the fields in trust which are there for the use of the public to play football, rugby, and cricket in the summer and are held there for perpetuity.</p> <p>Given that status, which means public access to be maintained or a similar area be nominated to replace the current site.</p> <p>What legal safeguards will be in place to ensure that the land remains in public ownership to stop anyone building or developing that green site.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader</b></p> <p>Swansea Bay Sports Park (SBSP) is the collective identity for a portfolio of sports facilities and infrastructure, situated between Sketty Lane and Ashleigh Road Playing Fields. Swansea Council has been working with Swansea University to develop a broad vision and ambition for the facilities, and are now ready to explore options for the future. Currently the facilities have a variety of management, operational and ownership arrangements and options will be appraised for their capacity to attract external funding and improve efficiency, creating additional value for the partnership and therefore its communities. A masterplan highlighting these opportunities is being investigated for feasibility which would further unlock capital funding in the future.</p> <p>The Partners are committed to working together to provide the necessary infrastructure for the future with a specific focus on the development of SBSP for community, student and elite sport and physical activity. Any future developments to the wider site, would be subject to the relevant and appropriate consultation and planning process. The position in relation to the open land/playing field status being Fields in Trust and public open space is fully understood and would feature in all considerations. There are no plans to develop the site for anything other than to improve the current offering, for sports such as football and cricket, plus general recreational opportunities, which remain key to the implementation of a future operating models between the partners.</p>
4	<p><b>Councillors Fiona Gordon, Lesley Walton, Wendy Lewis &amp; Mike White</b></p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member give us a list of what play areas will be renewed and updated in the next 18months.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events &amp; Tourism</b></p> <p>The Council has invested significantly in the condition improvement and play sufficiency of all its’ playgrounds and the programme has delivered accordingly.</p> <p>The works vary from significant upgrades to resurfacing and recently completed are:</p>

- Gendros, Coed Gwilym, Pontlliw, Phoenix Centre, Rees Row, DFS, Brynmill, Blaenymaes, Manselton Jersey Park, Yalton, Parc Llewelyn and Travellers Site.

Commencing imminently or already onsite are:

- Tregorf Village, Cwm Level, Longridge, Singleton Park, Cwm Glas, Sketty Community Centre, Waunarwydd, Ravenhill, Hollett Rd, Kingshead Rd and Parc Williams.

Sites programmed for the remainder of 24/25 are:

- Cwmbwrla, Garden Village, Morryston Park (MUGA), Underhill Park, Gors Ave, Brynmelyn, West Cross Woods, Glais, Parrys Park and Port Tennant.

Sites under consideration in 2025 for additional play:

- Parc Gwernfadog

**5 Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy & Stuart Rice**

A UK Public Accounts Committee report stated that the Council was £693.8 million in debt. Please can a schedule of all the loans making up the Councils current debt be provided with the following information:

- a. Amount of loan
- b. Start date of loan
- c. End date of loan
- d. The Lender
- e. Interest rate on the loan
- f. Annual interest paid to the lender
- g. Any specific purpose for the loan

**Response of the Leader**

The attached schedule shows the Council's total current snapshot portfolio of debt outstanding including small sums managed for third parties e.g. Trusts and Charities which are not for Council use.

You will note the current figure has moved from the old quoted PAC figures because there is a new small Salix loan (£0.4m), short term accrued interest (£6.6m), £3m of new Welsh Government interest free regeneration funding and because £20m of money market loans have recently been redeemed and repaid in full, the S151 Officer deeming it value to do so resulting in a net reduction of just under £10m to total loans outstanding. By the way, many of those money market loans have inherent optionality – Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBOS) – and at trigger dates when rates are reset suddenly looking expensive. Decisions made by others in the past, for undoubtedly the best of intentions at the time, have future consequences and costs.

All Treasury Management functions are delegated by council to the S151 officer and his excellent treasury team who have I remind you borrowed at extremely beneficial rates in recent years and who continue to deliver £millions of short term revenue savings against budget for the benefit of this council and all residents, and by holding substantial short term liquid cash means we do not have to borrow at present elevated rates. It is plain to see the gulf in rates secured before and after 2016, or perhaps I could have said, excluding the HRA forced buyout rate set by HM Treasury, before and after 2012!

Whilst loans are repaid at maturity or call date (money market) the council does continue to fully comply with the prudential code and set aside appropriate sums for minimum revenue provision to ensure cash is built up for future years to fund the

	<p>physical debt repayment even though the loan balance wont itself reduce unless physically repaid.</p> <p>The Council may only borrow funds for capital purposes (akin to a householder’s mortgage) and the portfolio outlined is reflective of the ambitious capital programme recently and currently being delivered throughout the City and within the Schools and HRA Estate. It can be seen that the recently incurred debt has been sourced at all time low interest rates, maximising the capital delivered from the funding.</p> <p>The total debt outlined also includes £167m in relation to the delivery of the HRA capital programme, of which £73m was incurred in ‘buying out ‘the HRA from the Housing Subsidy system in 2015. Given half of the Welsh Councils do not have an HRA, direct headline comparison between authorities can therefore be misleading.</p>
6	<p><b>Councillors Will Thomas &amp; Lyndon Jones</b></p> <p>Schools hold reserves and have benefitted in recent years with interest rates rising. Lloyd's bank however have dropped interest rates on schools accounts from 4.5% to 0.01%.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the council looking at moving all schools accounts to a bank that offers a fair rate</li> <li>Have the council tried to negotiate a better rate with Lloyds bank</li> <li>What was the collective amount of interest all schools in Swansea gained last year</li> </ol> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education &amp; Learning</b></p> <p>We are aware that interest rates paid by Lloyds have decreased during the last financial year, and investigation found that schools had previously been on the higher interest rate in error. The bank is not looking to recoup interest paid due to their mistake.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It should be noted that many years ago individual schools took the decision to remove themselves from the council’s corporate banking contract when changed regulations allowed them the option to do so, and now each school in Swansea holds their own individual banking contract with Lloyds. This is not the norm for primary schools across Wales where the vast majority remained with their council’s bank. This means that officers have no authority to discuss any part of the banking contract for schools with Lloyds, although through goodwill from Lloyds, on occasion we are able to liaise to help resolve queries; however, we are unable to negotiate on behalf of schools, as officers are not named on individual banking mandates. Individual banking contracts also mean that the terms and conditions of contracts (along with interest rates) can vary from school to school. The council’s banking contract is a standalone contract and if schools voiced their wish to become part of this in future, then we would consider at an appropriate time.</li> <li>We are unable to negotiate with Lloyds on behalf of schools, as we have no authority over school accounts. Each school has negotiated their own individual banking contract. We have taken action to help schools address the shortfall in interest rates by allowing schools to invest money in higher rate, instant access accounts. We are aware that secondary schools have taken up this offer and it has been successful in earning the school increased levels of interest.</li> <li>Schools have delegated bank accounts so all income receipted is paid directly to individual schools, and therefore we do not hold this level of information in Oracle Fusion.</li> </ol>
7	<p><b>Councillors Lyndon Jones &amp; Will Thomas</b></p>

	<p>When road closures are organised, alternative routes are put in place for vehicles. Now we are promoting “active travel”, does any thought go into offering a route for cyclists, which could be a shorter distance and more convenient for them.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Statutory processes exist regarding works or event notification, the Highways department liaises closely with both statutory undertakers and event organisers in terms of coordination and timing of works or events, also scrutiny and approval of any temporary traffic management proposals or temporary traffic regulation orders. All users of the highway are considered in ensuring safe and legible routes are provided for temporary situations.</p>
8	<p><b>Councillors Fiona Gordon, Lesley Walton, Wendy Lewis &amp; Mike White</b></p> <p>How many businesses have been helped this year through the shared prosperity fund in Swansea.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events &amp; Tourism</b></p> <p>Since the launch of the Shared Prosperity Fund Business Swansea programme in March 2023, 120 local businesses have been awarded £1.147m of financial support through small business grants as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-start grant – 37 grants totalling £156,775.64</li> <li>• Carbon reduction grant – 13 grants totalling £172,140.06</li> <li>• Website development grant – 24 grants totalling £29,269.27</li> <li>• Supplier development grant - 4 grants totalling £2,773.10</li> <li>• Innovation grant (only launched in January 2024) - 1 grant totalling £6,461.80</li> <li>• Growth Grant - 41 grants totalling £780,492.53</li> </ul> <p>In addition, 371 start-ups and established businesses have received non-financial support through, for example, attendance at workshops, business surgeries, networking events and/or one-to-one support.</p>
9	<p><b>Councillors Fiona Gordon, Lesley Walton, Wendy Lewis &amp; Mike White</b></p> <p>Can the Leader arrange for Councillors to have a tour of the impressive 71/72 The Kingsway new office block when it is completed and fitted out.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader</b></p> <p>Thank you for your question regarding a tour of 71/72 Kingsway. We have entered the very busy completion stage of this Grade A office development, so once we reach Practical Completion in August we would be happy to provide a tour of the building. Officers will be in touch to arrange a suitably convenient date.</p>
10	<p><b>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy &amp; Stuart Rice</b></p> <p>Since April there appears to be a city wide increase in the number of delayed or missed refuse and recycling collections. This is resulting in extra resource being required to pick up detritus from bags that have been split by wildlife.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What are the reasons behind these delayed collections</li> <li>b. What steps are being taken to find a solution</li> </ol>

	<p>c. What is the timescale that residents can expect to receive a fit for purpose basic service</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</b></p> <p>a. The daily delays have been caused by shortages in labour and/or vehicle issues.  b. The waste collection team are in the process of recruiting additional drivers and collection operatives to increase the pool of labour resource available.  The central transport unit have already ordered new collection vehicles to replace the existing vehicles which are reaching life expiry. Delivery and changeover to these new collection vehicles has already started.  c. While residents may experience some delays in their collections, for which we apologise, the current system is fit for purpose. The current collection system is already achieving the 2024/25 statutory recycling targets, at the same time as WLGA benchmarking showing it as part of one of the most cost effective waste management services in Wales.</p>
11	<p><b>Councillors Lyndon Jones &amp; Brigitte Rowlands</b></p> <p>How many agency workers were taken on by Swansea Council last year and how does that compare to previous years.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services &amp; Performance</b></p> <p>Numbers of placements by worker are not collated due to the volume of short term placements required throughout the year, many of which will be of just a few days' duration each. There are circa 11 agencies providing short term workers to the Council with a total spend of £6.8m in 2023-24 compared to £6.3m in 2022-23. This increase equates to the inflationary linked pay rise in 2023-24 and shows that there has not been an overall increase in agency usage in the last year. A new agency provider framework will be in place from Summer 2024 and as part of contract monitoring arrangements, data collation of placements by worker will be requested.</p> <p>Further detail is available in the April 2024 update to Governance and Audit Committee - <a href="#">click here for Employment of Agency Workers update April 2024</a></p>
12	<p><b>Councillors James McGettrick, Mike Day, Cheryl Philpott, Nicols Furlong &amp; Michael Locke</b></p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member give an update on the future of St Helens.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events &amp; Tourism</b></p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with the main stakeholders and the current position was the subject of a report to Cabinet on the 16<sup>th</sup> May. The intention is to consider a new operating model at St. Helen's Ground to improve the sporting offer as a regional and community facility. Further information will be made available once a clearer picture is known on potential direction of travel.</p>
13	<p><b>Councillors Francesca O'Brien, Will Thomas &amp; Angela O'Connor</b></p> <p>What measures of support are Swansea City Council giving to local businesses considering the many disruptions happening in Mumbles.</p>

## **Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism**

Swansea Council has implemented various measures to support local businesses in Mumbles during the construction period of the coastal defences. It should be noted that the primary disruption at present is due to emergency works being conducted by Wales and West utilities on the existing Victorian gas infrastructure. The network management teams are liaising closely to limit disruption along the highway network and temporary traffic signals are now only operational during weekdays to avoid disruption on weekends.

From the outset, efforts have been made to reduce the impact and time taken to construct the sea defences. The construction method statement was adapted to ensure access to the promenade is maintained outside the area of the works to ensure the public are still able to enjoy the majority of the promenade. In terms of construction, a number of elements have been prefabricated in order to reduce the time taken on site.

The programme of works has been managed to ensure that minimum disruption is caused wherever possible. The area located adjacent to Oyster Wharf was undertaken during the quieter winter months. Close liaison with the businesses located at Oyster Wharf meant that some of the more intensive works in this area coincided with the restaurant refurbishments.

Alternative temporary provision has been made to accommodate the pop up vending units which are located along the prom, allowing them the opportunity to continue trading whilst the works take place. A new and improved area will be provided for street traders upon scheme completion, including the provision of electricity hook up points that will remove the need for noisy and polluting diesel generators.

Early on in the programme of works, alternative car parking was constructed along Mumbles Road in order to mitigate the loss of car parking due to scheme construction and the use of the Quarry Car Park as a site compound. The contractor, Knights Brown, provides local businesses that have registered their interest with monthly newsletters and updates on the scheme. The Contract is aligned to the 'Considerate Contractors' scheme, which promotes the use of local supply chains; examples include sourcing the planting from local suppliers and employing a local workforce etc.

Promotional initiatives have been broadcasted across council social media platforms, informing the public that Mumbles is still open for business and providing advertisement of events and activities taking place in the village. A temporary turning head has been created through negotiation with third party land owners in order to ensure continued operation of the land train during the period of works. Every effort has been made to ensure that key tourism and sporting events such as triathlons, Swansea 10k and Mumbles Raft Race are able to continue with minor adaptations.

Fundamentally, the works are being developed to safeguard businesses and the community from flooding, ensuring that the measures protect, maintain and where possible enhance the character of the area.

**Part B – No Supplementaries**

14	<p><b>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Sandra Joy &amp; Stuart Rice</b></p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member provide a brief update on the progress of the 5G living lab test bed and the councils input into the plans.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Infrastructure</b></p> <p>The Swansea University project is currently in the procurement phase, which is expected to conclude shortly. The University will then work with the provider to submit Planning applications to the Council during the next phase of delivery.</p>
15	<p><b>Councillors Kevin Griffiths, Mark Tribe &amp; Mary Jones</b></p> <p>As there are a number of large housing sites being delivered, has any consideration been given to the effects on landfill and our recycling rates.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</b></p> <p>To obtain planning permission, each application submitted to the Council needs to contain information from the developer on how they propose residents can store and present their waste and recycling. The proposal needs to fit with the Council's waste collection system, which has been designed to ensure the Council meets statutory recycling targets and minimises waste wherever possible.</p>