



Council – 5 September 2024

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1 Councillors Chris Holley, Jeff Jones & Lynda James

Will the Leader outline what the council's current debt is.

Response of the Leader

This administration has overseen a sustained reduction in the borrowing pool rate from over 6% to less than 4%. We have avoided taking out lender option borrower option (LOBO) loans seemingly often favoured by the previous Lib Dem administration.

Instead we have closely followed the advice of the CFO to take out affordable borrowing at historically low rates of less than 2% and have locked the rate in for up to 50 years protecting the council tax payer from the turmoil inflicted by the Liz Truss government.

This borrowing has yet to be fully deployed but is there to use to support new schools, match grants from UK Government and support economic development - all at a rate which is just over 1/3 of the current market rate.

At the same time this administration has continued to prudently fully set aside sums (in line with the agreed Minimum Revenue Provision Policy) to prepare to pay off debt taken out by this and all previous administrations upon maturity.

While the headline amount remains unchanged, due to the way debt is accounted for at maturity with accrued interest, at £693m, this is somewhat misleading as a gross figure and is not easily directly comparable with all other councils.

Firstly, it includes the HRA amount and this automatically inflates the debt figure by around £167m for the HRA capital programme including £73m for HRA buyout. Only 11 of the 22 councils have HRAs. We know the previous Lid Dem administration attempted to sell Swansea's housing stock and effectively privatise social housing in Swansea - we stopped this happening.

Secondly the figure also ignores the 'set aside' amounts which are there to pay off debt once the various borrowings reach maturity.

Last year for instance we proposed to set aside £24m, and before that a cumulative over £150m would have been set aside since 2012.

Therefore the remaining element of the net indebtedness could be argued by some, including me, to be worth roughly half the headline figure, albeit it is fully recognised the debt is of course the actual total debt as fully reported previously by the CFO.

It's also worth noting that last years (22-23) financial resilience testing and reporting of council accounts across Wales has shown Swansea has the highest level of liquidity (more than double the Welsh average and more than 50% higher than any other authority) and a very strong and robust reserves position.

2 Councillors Mike White, Wendy Lewis & Fiona Gordon

Swansea has a heritage to be proud of, however many of our heritage buildings fell into disrepair or dereliction and were at risk of being lost forever. Can the Leader or Cabinet Member tell us how many heritage buildings have been saved for future generations and what buildings are being considered for the next phase of restoration.

Response of the Leader

This Labour administration has committed to build a better Swansea as part of its programme of Government. This includes a commitment to build new schools, homes, play areas, and invest in infrastructure like roads support a range of economic regeneration projects. However, this also includes restoring and renovating our historic cultural buildings, and repurposing them for future sustainable use.

There are over 500 listed buildings in Swansea. Whilst the great majority of listed buildings are in good condition, there is no legal obligation for owners to maintain these buildings and as a result there are a number of privately owned buildings that have fallen into disuse, dereliction and disrepair. These are commonly referred to as 'Listed Buildings at Risk'.

The Council has a Listed Buildings at Risk Strategy (available at <https://swansea.gov.uk/listedbuildingsatrisk>), linked to which is a Register of Listed Buildings at Risk which is periodically updated particularly when new evidence is available about changes in circumstances.

The Listed Building at Risk Strategy sets out two main approaches to ensuring Swansea's heritage assets are maintained and where appropriate enhanced. Firstly, for Public Sector Leadership by the Council in terms of safeguarding its own listed buildings, and secondly taking a proactive and collaborative approach working with private owners of listed buildings. Over the last 20 years significant public funds have been invested by the Council on projects to maintain, restore and/or regenerate Listed Buildings in Swansea, and in addition significant sums have been levered from a range of external funding sources to support these projects.

Examples of the Council's leadership and proactive approach to save our heritage assets include:

- Albert Hall - an at risk grade II listed building where there has been public sector funding support and a close working relationship with the private owners to repurpose the former Bingo hall to a mixed use regeneration project with food hall due to open in 2024.
- St Lukes, Cwmbwla - an at risk grade II listed building where there has been public sector funding support and close working with the charity to purpose the redundant church as a space now in use for social inclusion circus skills.
- Windsor Lodge - an at risk grade II listed building where there has been close working with the new private owners to convert to a HMO due to open in 2024.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palace Theatre - an at risk grade II listed building, purchased by the Council from private owners and now nearing the end of a sensitive conversion to a co-working space with public sector funding support due to open in 2024. • Hafod/ Morfa Copperworks Powerhouse - an at risk grade II listed building where the Council has restored the building with NHLF support as a location for Penderyn Distillery. <p>There continues to be investment and significant staff resources committed to addressing heritage buildings identified as being at risk. The ongoing project to restore and regenerate buildings at the Hafod/Morfa Copperworks, which is utilising Levelling Up Funding, provides an example of work ongoing relating to a Council owned asset. In addition, the recent planning permission granted for a mixed use conversion of the former Castle Cinema to provide high quality commercial space and affordable homes, is an example of a successful project that required the Council to commit significant staff resources to working collaboratively with a private sector owner to give a key heritage building a new lease of life.</p> <p>The Council is also supporting feasibility studies to identify any measures that may be required to address issues on a range of privately controlled listed buildings at risk (funded via the SPF programme), which includes Swiss Cottage, Singleton Park, Dinas Noddfa Chapel, Landore and Hendrefoilan House.</p> <p>As a result of the significant financial and staff resources committed to delivering on the aims of the Listed Buildings at risk Strategy, overall the number of listed buildings at risk is expected to drop from 51 in 2023 to 45 in Autumn 2024.</p>
3	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Allan Jeffrey & Sandra Joy</p> <p>Food waste put in a black or any other type of plastic bag rather than in the correct container causes a problem. This can occur for routine domestic collections or being dumped at random times. It inevitably is attacked by seagulls and strewn across the pavement which involves extra council resources to pick it up.</p> <p>How many successful prosecutions have been made where this practice has occurred since 1st August 2023.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>Since August 2023 we have served 35 Keep Recycling Out (KRO) statutory notices to ensure that residents place recycling, including food waste, out correctly.</p> <p>Over the same period, we have also issued 649 statutory notices to prevent waste, including food waste, being placed out wrong day, wrong week, wrong place, wrong bag and excess of 3 bags. 17 breaches of these notices have resulted in fixed penalty notices being issued and 1 prosecution for failing to comply with terms of statutory notice.</p>
4	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Sam Bennett & Jeff Jones</p> <p>Weekend road closures for major events are having a significant impact on the work of the District Nursing Service which operates 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and covers the whole of the City and County of Swansea, providing essential services to house bound patients.</p> <p>It seems that no provision has been made to enable district nurses to visit patients where road closures have been implemented. Although district nurses are able to show stewards evidence of appointments or emergency call outs, there have been</p>

occasions when they're been denied access to the necessary roads and this could be potentially life threatening.

Will the Cabinet Member therefore review the present arrangements during times of road closures and indicate what can be done to ensure that all stewards are made aware of the need to allow access by district nurses.

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

Each summer Swansea plays host to several major events, which, whilst offering a very positive economic return and profile for the area, will always encounter challenges, particularly when they disrupt the normal daily routines of our citizens.

With events of this scale, some road closures are almost always necessary as part of an event delivery process to ensure the safety of competitors, spectators and the wider community. Often, event road closures, whilst they may appear numerous, may be rolling; for short periods; early in the morning or late in the evening. Wherever possible, resident and business access is maintained. However, we recognise that this can mean changes to normal routines for short periods of time.

By way of mitigating against this disruption, we publicise these road changes well in advance to as wide an audience as possible in order to enable stakeholders, businesses and citizens time to plan and to advise their customers accordingly.

Access is maintained for emergency services at all times, this includes access for district nurses on an emergency call out. Stewards are briefed to contact the event control room via 2-way radio with any such access requests.

The events team have previously engaged with NHS colleagues and are not aware of any concerns raised by the district nursing team.

5 Councillors Andrew Williams, Mike Lewis & Sara Keeton

Can the relevant Cabinet Member update Council on what projects and local organisations have been allocated funding via the Council's Rural Anchor fund.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Swansea Rural Anchor has awarded funding to 34 rural projects across Swansea, totalling £486,756.

The successful projects are:

1. Volunteers Rural Information and Advice Network - Age Cymru West Glamorgan
2. Smarter, Cleaner Gower Renewables - Down to Earth
3. Red Lady Project and Visitor Trail - Tourism Swansea Bay
4. Petallica Eco Community Market - Petallica Flower Farm CIC
5. Mawr Agriculture and Farmer Engagement and Needs Analysis - Bwyd Abertawe
6. Designing Scalable Apple Storage for Swansea Orchards - Cyfoeth y Coed
7. Installation of Air Source Heat Pumps - Bont Elim Community Church
8. Supporting Volunteering at Penllergare - The Penllergare Trust
9. Head Forward with Nature: A wellbeing programme for people and the environment to benefit together - Happy Headwork Community C.I.C
10. Welfare Hall Refurbishment - IT and Blinds - Llchwyr Town Council

11. Building Biodiversity and Resilience to Climate Change for mutual benefit to the Environment and Community - Cae Felin CSA CIC
12. Rural Community Voices: a feasibility study for Craig Cefn Parc - Mawr Community Council
13. Renewable Energy Project for Llanmorlais Hall - The Llanmorlais and District Community Hall Trust
14. A Bug's Life: Mawr Biodiversity Project 2.0 - Mawr Community Council
15. ClearFlood - new LED Floodlights - Friends of Craig Cefn Parc (FoCCP)
16. Install Solar Panels and Battery Electricity Storage - Three Crosses Community Council
17. Crwydro Creadigol Gŵyr: Reflective Rambling in Gower - Gower Ministry Area
18. Felindre Food and Crafts Market - Felindre Welfare Hall
19. Refurbishment and Energy Efficiency Retrofit Feasibility Study - Llanmadoc and Cheriton Village Hall
20. Nature Quest Neighbourhood Trail - Bantani Cymru CIC
21. Solar energy collection, storage and utilisation and additional thermal insulation to reduce / replace mains electricity usage at village hall - Upper Killay Community Council
22. Solar Panel / Battery and LED Project - Bishopston Community Council
23. The Gower Food and Drink Festival 2024 - Pennard Community Council
24. Surf To Success - Surf Therapy CIC
25. Graig y Coed Woodland Project - Llanrhidian Higher Community Council
26. Cooperatives and Collaborative Working for Food Businesses in Rural Swansea - Swansea Council - Swansea Food Partnership
27. Enhancing our Green Space - 6th Llangyfelach Scout Group
28. Development of Community Garden and Coed Gwilym Park Grounds by Volunteers - Friends of Coed Gwilym Park
29. Solar PV and Battery Storage Project - Grovesend Miners Welfare Trust Scheme
30. Otter and Water Vole Restoration Project - The Penllergare Trust
31. Gower Loaf Flour Milling Project - Y Felin Ddwr Charitable Trust
32. Farming and Families; Mumbles to Bishopston - Gower Unearthed
33. Solar Battery Project - Reynoldston Village Hall Association
34. Solar Panels to Existing Changing Room Building - Friends of Coed Gwilym Park

The Swansea Rural Anchor page on the Swansea Council website provides further information on each project including the amount of funding they have received:

[Rural Anchor Funding \(SPF\) - Swansea](#)

6 Councillors Peter Black, James McGettrick & Kevin Griffiths

Will the Leader set out the details of and any conditions attached to the funding of the Penderyn whisky visitor centre.

Response of the Leader

The total NLHF grant funding comprises of 3 separate awards to date totalling £5.2m. These awards contained the standard terms and conditions of NLHF funding. No additional special conditions were specified by NLHF and regular contact has been maintained with NLHF to date. This requirement has been met by a 99 year lease being in place. A seasonal operation or temporary cessation of production does not impact any of the grant terms.

The NLHF award letter states that the standard terms of grant will last from January 2019 until a term of 10 years after the project completion date. There is a requirement that the grant funding is utilised to achieve the approved 14 purposes outlined in the award letter and the NLHF is satisfied with delivery and progress of

	<p>the scheme to date with the majority of grant paid to the council. These 14 purposes focus on the delivery of the physical improvements, public realm works, working closely with stakeholders, delivery of a programme of site activities, commissioning an external evaluation of the project and acknowledging the grant funding received.</p>
7	<p>Councillors Adam Davis, Paul Lloyd & David Jenkins</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member update us on the work of the (CWOTs) Councillors Ward Operatives Teams. Can the Cabinet Members also provide assurance that the teams will be retained in future years to help keep our communities tidy.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>The Cleansing Ward Operative Team (CWOT) has been extremely successful since its inception in the latter part of 2022 with its purpose of delivering enhanced cleansing work in every ward as directed by Members. There have been numerous recorded compliments of the works delivered by the teams from Members to residents in social media posts.</p> <p>Examples of the most common types of work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove detritus (soil/leaves) built up at build outs, pedestrian islands, crossing points, bus shelters etc. • Remove excessive weed growth which won't blow away after spraying • Clearance of trapped litter • Clear isolated instances of fly tipping from land in unknown ownership if visible from public areas • Deep clean in areas of leaf fall • Basic overgrowth cut back works with hand tools. <p>In the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 this led to an additional 417 tons of waste being removed by the CWOT, 144t of which was green and 273t general waste.</p>
8	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Mary Jones & Mark Tribe</p> <p>What is the current position regarding the Council depot site at Pipe House Wharf and the location of any new site.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>A report on the wider Depot Review that will outline the current position of Pipe House Wharf will be presented to Cabinet in September.</p>
9	<p>Councillors Patience Bentu, Matthew Jones & Bev Hopkins</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member(s) give an update on the help made available by the Council to support families and residents over the summer months.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing</p> <p>There is a variety of low cost, or no cost activities provided by Swansea Council during the summer months that are publicised on the Council website Summer holiday fun - Swansea</p>

However, there are certain schemes that are specifically in place to support families and residents over the summer months as noted below;

Holiday Food Fund (Summer 2024)

Up to £150,000 of funding was made available prior to the school summer holidays to provide food support for school aged children and their families during the holiday. The grant was promoted widely, inviting applications from organisations, community groups and services. 48 applications were approved by the funding panel, allocating almost £144,000. (5 were declined where the essential criteria of the grant were not met)

A wide range of food support was available throughout the summer holiday through events, groups and services including hot meals, packed lunches, food parcels and food vouchers. It is estimated that this funding has provided over 70,000 meals this summer.

COAST Fund (Summer 2024)

Up to £500,000 of funding was made available prior to the summer period to provide free at point of delivery or low-cost activities for children, young people and families or 50+ residents. The grant availability was promoted widely, and we received 208 applications totalling £740,258. The Funding panel awarded grants to 164 approved applicants (2 providers subsequently turned down funding).

A total of 42 grants were awarded for projects for 50 + residents and a total of 122 projects were funded for children, young people and families. Activities are ongoing and a final report will be produced after summer period.

Cwtch Mawr Multi-bank

Swansea Council are a key partner in the Cwtch Mawr multi-bank, which is providing essential goods to those in need. Partners include a number of charities and groups throughout Swansea, who refer individuals and families to the multi-bank for donations of essential items as they are not a customer facing site.

An example of the support this and the Council has provided to families over the summer period is we have delivered over 1,000 rucksacks containing items appropriate for primary and secondary school aged children ready for when they return to school in September.

Free Bus Services

The popular free bus offer is running for the summer holidays and applies to journeys that start before 7pm every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday from Friday 26 July to Monday 26 August for all journeys that start and finish within the Swansea Council area.

It is accessible to all travelling in Swansea, and you do not need to show proof that you live in Swansea to receive free travel. This applies to bus services operated by First Cymru, Adventure Travel, South Wales Transport and DANSA are included. The only services that are not included are the Longer-distance coach services operated by National Express, Megabus and Flixbus and First Cymru's Services 51 and 52 to and from the park and ride car parks.

Direct Food Support (DFS) Grant

We are currently in the process of awarding Welsh Government's Capital grant for DFS, a total of £56,032 to 36 successful applicants (fully allocated).

	<p>This grant funding will support organisations to access, store and distribute additional supplies of food, including good food surplus, boosting their capacity to provide good quality, nutritious food to their customers. This covers a range of purchases such as cookers, fridges, tools for community growing, food storage containers, etc.</p> <p>Men’s Sheds Grant We are currently in the process of awarding the Council’s grant for existing and emerging Men’s Sheds projects, a total of £25,723 to 22 successful applicants (fully allocated).</p> <p>‘Men’s Sheds’ (or Women’s Sheds) are social groups or enterprises set up in local communities, for social interaction and promoting positive well-being, they are self-governed and self-supported. The Council continues to support this scheme working closely with Men’s Sheds Cymru and local communities.</p> <p>Period Dignity in the Community Grant We are currently in the process of awarding the community element of Welsh Government’s Period Dignity Grant, a total of £65,000 is available and we have recently completed the funding panel process. Further information will be available once the panel recommendations have been actioned and successful candidates have been notified.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
10	<p>Councillors Peter Black, Sam Bennett & Sue Jones</p> <p>What discussions has the Cabinet Member had with Natural Resources Wales regarding the amount of sewage in Swansea Bay.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance</p> <p>Officers from the Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing Team are in regular contact with colleagues from Natural Resources Wales regarding pollution incidents in the River Tawe. NRW liaise with Dwr Cymru Welsh Water over the number and duration of spills from sewer overflows, with the aim of reducing them, and where there are problems NRW will take action.</p>
11	<p>Councillors Peter Black, Mike Day & Wendy Fitzgerald</p> <p>Please list the number of recorded fly tipping incidents by Ward for 2023/24 together with the number of fixed penalty notices and prosecutions.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>Please see information below on number of recorded fly tipping incidents where waste was removed by ward and number of fixed penalty notices and prosecutions from 1 April 2023 to 14 August 2024.</p>

Ward	Waste removed	Fixed penalty notice for fly tipping
Bishopston	7	
Bonymaen	153	1
Castle	909	13
Clydach	53	1
Cockett	84	2
Cwmbwrla	243	1
Dunvant	0	
Fairwood	12	
Gorseinon	5	
Gower	7	
Gowerton	24	1
Killay north	2	
Killay south	0	
Kingsbridge	0	
Landore	221	4
Llangyfelach	28	
Llansamlet	96	
Lower Loughor	0	
Mawr	10	
Mayals	15	
Morrison	298	4
Mynyddbach	192	
Newton	0	
Oystermouth	1	
Penclawdd	9	
Penderry	307	1
Penlleger	25	
Pennard	6	
Penyrheol	1	
Pontarddulais	67	4
St Thomas	199	
Sketty	98	
Townhill	671	
Uplands	735	
Upper Loughor	0	
West Cross	59	
Waterfront	32	3
Waunarlwydd	46	1
Dunvant and Killay	29	
Pontlliw and Tircoed	7	1
Gorseinon and Penyrheol	136	4
Llwchwr	48	
Mumbles	27	

Over the same period there were 3 prosecutions for fly tipping across all wards.

12	<p>Councillors Mary Jones, Cheryl Philpott & Nicola Furlong</p> <p>Has the Council been part of any discussion taken place about the future use of the Coastguard station in Mumbles.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism</p> <p>The building on Tutt Head is owned by the Coastguards Association by way of a long lease is currently being marketed by appointed agents. The Council have agreed to grant a new extended lease to the eventual purchaser and will at that point be dealing with a new leaseholder. More widely the Council continues to meet regularly and offer support in relation to the issues that currently exist at the Pier.</p>
13	<p>Councillors Mary Jones, Jeff Jones & James McGettrick</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member inform Council when will all the current problems with refuse collections are going to be resolved.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>The Waste Team is working hard, supported by other Service Areas, to make the transition to new ways of working and bring online the new fleet of refuse vehicles, as smooth as possible and quickly resolve any issues with waste collections. We are seeing an improving picture week on week, and are progressing a number of actions to address issues quickly including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making adjustments to collection rounds where needed to ensure that they can usually be completed each day, • Dealing with any ongoing performance issues, • Deploying additional temporary mop-up resources to minimise any delays to collections due to any rounds not being completed, • Bringing in temporary extra resources to give flexibility and more cover for unexpected issues • Updating our entire fleet of refuse collection vehicles at a cost of over £8m to reduce occurrence of vehicle breakdowns • Recruiting 20 extra staff <p>We are very grateful to the public for their continued patience, cooperation and understanding during this transition, It is anticipated that this improvement will continue with collections being far more settled as the above actions take effect.</p>
14	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Allan Jeffery & Sandra Joy</p> <p>In most forms of Government the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer are two separate people. Indeed in Wales the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance are also two separate people. Since 2014, in Swansea Council however, the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Finance have been the same person.</p> <p>How many other of the 21 Welsh Councils operate this unusual model as seen in Swansea.</p>

Response of the Leader

Local Government is not National Government and vice versa. Roles often have to be doubled up given there is a limit to the number of cabinet positions afforded under local government legislation and there is no historic convention of an ancient office of state such as Chancellor of the Exchequer (who of course is “only” second Lord of the treasury, the Prime Minister being very much the First Lord of the Treasury) formally to be appointed separately to, unlike National Government.

I have also made clear I think it is right that I, as Leader have strategic oversight of all financial matters. It is of course a matter for each of the other 21 to decide how they structure. From an initial review of other council’s portfolio totals there are at least 6 other leaders with elements of some or all of finance in their portfolio.

Each council is unique and direct comparisons and portfolio structures are not always possible but I can very much assure you the model is not that unique or unusual and only in Swansea. Many clearly think it works very well, as do I, in Swansea, especially.