



## Council – 5 December 2024 (7 November Questions)

### Councillors' Questions

#### Part A – Supplementaries

##### 1 Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Mary Jones & Cheryl Philpott

Swansea was recently included at the top of the list of the 10 worst places to live in the UK by the consultancy firm PWC. This was due to a number of factors such as a high drug use.

Whilst we who live here would hotly dispute this categorisation, it is nevertheless potentially damaging to Swansea's reputation as a major tourist destination. What should the Council be doing to remedy this situation.

#### Response of the Leader

Swansea's economy is projected to be the seventh fastest growing in the UK next year, which is testament to all that's been achieved so far and our plans for the future.

The Good Growth for Cities report produced by PwC on behalf of UK Government on delivering devolution covers a significant number of factors for measuring good growth within cities and overall notes an improvement. It is important to note the "Good Growth" methodology utilised by PwC as context to the report which covers the whole of the UK in particular the index variables, geographical areas and associated weightings. It also highlights a spotlight on Swansea transforming for shared prosperity, whilst recognising the challenges of economic disparity and some areas with significant deprivation.

Through our destination marketing campaigns, we continue to highlight Swansea as a welcoming, exciting destination for visitors.

The Council's Tourism Team actively promotes Swansea Bay with campaigns like 'Happy Place' and 'Swansea Bay Trails,' which feature our unique offerings—from arts and culture to food, beaches, and city centre attractions. This year, we launched a high-profile Outdoor Media Campaign, supported by the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), reaching key target markets via major transport hubs and locations across the M4 corridor and high-traffic areas in London.

Highlights of our efforts in 2024:

- **Campaign Success:** Targeted digital marketing, new video content, and PR campaigns have gained coverage in prominent outlets like *The Times* and *Practical Motorhome Magazine*, with another secured article due to be published in *Coast Magazine* in January.
- **Swansea Bay Live Campaign:** Focused on promoting live music, arts, and culture, this campaign added 851 cultural events to our listings across 66 venues, attracting an audience of over 328,000 through our digital channels.

- **Extensive Media Presence:** New advertisements across Swansea, Cardiff, and Bristol invite potential visitors to experience Swansea’s thriving arts and culture scene.
- **Investment in Photography and Video:** New photography and videography contracts were completed to secure new imagery and video footage to promote the arts and cultural sector, with the Swansea Bay Live video generating **70K** total views since its launch in mid-July.

Our events and infrastructure investments also help reinforce Swansea’s appeal:

- **Popular Events:** Signature events like the Wales Airshow and Ironman 70.3 continue to draw large crowds, with new events such as Swansea Arts Weekend (Autumn 2024) and others in the pipeline for Spring 2025 which will contribute to our diverse and inclusive events offering.
- **City Centre Development:** Projects like Albert Hall and Palace Theatre revitalisation and the Copr Bay area add to Swansea’s transformation and appeal and the introduction of a new, and likely to be Swansea’s largest, hotel will also give people more reasons to visit and stay.

Tourism generated £609 million in economic impact in 2023—an increase of 5%—supporting over 5,400 jobs and attracting 4.7 million visitors.

In response to the concerns around the prevalence of drugs, the Western Bay Area Planning Board launched an independent Drugs Commission to look at the root causes of the high rates in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Since the summer of 2023, the Commission has carried out public facing sessions and has also visited services across Western Bay engaging with staff/service users. The Commission’s recommendations will be made around key challenges focusing on: culture and governance, data, housing, mental wellbeing, prescribing and primary/shared care and will be published in 2025.

Alongside this work a new mechanism for the commissioning of services has been developed and agreed by all partners. An Alliance Commissioning model will be adopted for Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, the Alliance model involves a whole system transformation which includes planning of new clinical and support services, designing new drug and alcohol treatment pathways and commissioning services jointly using a pooled budget to address the factors highlighted.

**2 Councillors Andrew Williams & Fiona Gordon**

Many residents in Swansea are still struggling to make ends meet following years of Tory Austerity, economic mismanagement, and the Liz Truss cost of living crisis. Would the relevant Cabinet Members outline the extra support and help being made available to residents in Swansea this Winter from this Labour run Swansea Council.

**Response of the Leader**

We continue to offer a wide range of services and programmes supporting people and communities across Swansea impacted by the ongoing Cost of Living crisis and the wider impacts of poverty in our region. There is regularly updated information on the help available via the Council’s Cost of Living webpage [Cost of living help - Swansea](#).

In addition, we launched our *#hereforyouthiswinter* campaign, which is a combination of Swansea Council, Welsh Government and UK Government funding initiatives which includes:

1. COAST (Creating Opportunities Across Swansea Together) - Children and Young People
2. COAST (Creating Opportunities Across Swansea Together) - 50 plus
3. Swansea Spaces
4. Holiday Food Fund
5. Direct Food Support

The COAST fund aims to provide free or affordable activities for the people of Swansea, specifically for children, young people and families during the school holiday periods and weekends up to 28 February 2025, as well as for people aged 50 and over delivered between 12 December 2024 and 28 February 2025.

The Swansea Spaces fund aims to support the provision of safe and warm spaces in the local community where people can go to benefit from social interaction. This will be more than just warm spaces for individuals to attend, they will be an inviting place to be and will be open and inclusive and available for all in the community to use.

Holiday Food Fund aims to help with providing access to food during the Christmas school holidays and Spring half term for school aged children and their families who are struggling with costs. This helps mitigate child food poverty and food insecurity during the school holidays by providing food packages, access to food or the provision of good quality meals/food on site.

The Direct Food Support fund aims to support an increased number of people facing food poverty and food insecurity by strengthening existing community food. This means revenue or capital funding to develop or strengthen projects such as social supermarkets, community cafes, lunch clubs and community cookery classes.

While this new grant funding initiative – our biggest ever package of help and support for young people, families and older residents over the Winter period – is open for applications until 20 November 2024.

Additional support available for the people and communities of Swansea includes:

- Continuing to work in partnership with the Cwtch Mawr Multi-bank to source essential items for people in the greatest need, such as warm packs and back to school essentials;
- Extend the free bus travel offer for the Christmas period, including Monday and Tuesday Christmas week, and then for 5 days in the week after Christmas;
- Working in partnership with our key partners, stakeholders, networks and communities to raise awareness of local offers, opportunities and organisations supporting our residents;
- Deliver a range of free or affordable Council events that support the most vulnerable people in our communities, including the annual Together at Christmas event and the Christmas Parade in the city centre.

We will also be shortly issuing our refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy for public consultation, seeking the views of our residents and communities about what more can be done to support people and families who are at risk of or experiencing poverty and hardship.

3	<p><b>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy &amp; Allan Jeffrey</b></p> <p>How much has been spent on the new Oracle system by the Council.</p> <p>What was the original budget. Have there been any issues with retrieving historical data.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader/ Cabinet Member for Service Transformation ??</b></p> <p>An Oracle Fusion closure report was presented to the Scrutiny Programme Committee on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023.  <a href="#">Agenda for Scrutiny Programme Committee on Tuesday, 17 October 2023, 4.00 pm - Swansea</a></p> <p>At this meeting the financial implications for the project were presented. A further update on progress as well as future developments planned is being taken to Cabinet Members in November and Scrutiny Programme Committee in the New Year.</p> <p>With regard to retrieving historical data, the migration of data was successful and a subsequent internal audit report gave data migration an assurance level of 'high'. Not all data was migrated to Oracle Fusion. Decisions were taken by services during the project around the level of data to migrate and this was communicated out to staff. However, the old system is still accessible to service leads as an archive, therefore any historic data not migrated over to Fusion can still be accessed on request.</p>
4	<p><b>Councillors Peter Black, Kevin Griffiths &amp; Susan Jones</b></p> <p>What is the Council doing to increase the take-up of pension credit in our area.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader</b></p> <p>Swansea Council (and all other UK Local Authorities) was asked by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to assist with encouraging potentially eligible people to apply for pension Credit. Applications are particularly being encouraged at this time as eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment now depends on entitlement to Pension Credit.</p> <p>No funding has been provided by the DWP to assist with the costs of this activity and obviously local authorities have limited resources available to do this at short notice so individual contact would not be possible for the most part. Also, to ensure those who may be eligible are given as much time as possible to apply, it was necessary to act at pace.</p> <p>Immediate action was taken to issue social media posts encouraging people to apply, information was put on the screens in the civic centre and in all libraries. Posters were put up in the civic centre, in particular the coffee shop as we know pensioner groups meet there for social events. The Council's Aging Well team were also asked to include information in their regular weekly newsletters which they have done on multiple occasions. Revenues and Benefits Customer Services staff have been made aware of the drive to encourage applications for Pension Credit so they can signpost any customers they deal with who might be eligible.</p>

In addition to that, the Revenues and Benefits service, working with colleagues in the Welfare Rights Team, issued a mailshot to some 2,000 residents who we believe might be eligible for Pension Credit. The letter provided brief details about the benefits of claiming Pension Credit, explained how to apply and provided contact details for sources of advice such as Citizens Advice and Age Cymru. All members were sent a copy of the letter (In Welsh and English) and some background information and a number have already contacted the Revenues and Benefits service about the mailshot. We are very grateful for member assistance with sharing the publicity wider on their various media channels.

Other departments of the council have also been involved.

### **Social Services**

Information about Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payments and Pension Credit has been shared through the Tackling Poverty email distribution list to local authority staff and external partners, and they have been asked to pass this on to their contacts/clients also.

Around 2,000 Social Services Staff have been reminded about the opportunities around Pension Credit in the weekly Directors Briefing, so they could share this with their clients. Two budget presentations to Adult Services social workers included information about benefits including pension credit.

In the coming weeks there will also be some information talks given to some pensioner groups and Pension Credit will be covered in those as well. Additional information on this topic is to be added to the Council's web pages.

### **Housing**

The Housing Department Rents team have provided training/awareness sessions to all rents team staff and will be cascading this training to Independent Living Officers and Area Housing Office staff in the coming weeks. They have always tried to help tenants claim pension credits if they appear entitled but the awareness sessions will hopefully increase and encourage more tenants to apply. The Rents Team are also working with the Revenues and Benefits Section to identify Council tenants who may be eligible so specific action can be taken to encourage them to apply.

### **Libraries**

As already mentioned, the Library service have supported this initiative by arranging for information to be displayed as screensavers on the public PCs in all libraries.

All this extra effort by the authority compliments the measures taken by the DWP within whose remit Pension Credit falls. Taken together, I consider that the authority has made significant additional effort to support the DWP's drive to increase Pension Credit take up, with no additional resources or funding, whilst also managing their usual day to day tasks.

The authority is of course pleased we are able to support this initiative as the cost to us would be outweighed by the potential financial benefit to anyone who claims Pension Credit as a result of our efforts and is determined to be eligible.

5 **Councillors Lesley Walton, Wendy Lewis, Victoria Holland & Andrew Williams**

The recent PWC report identified Swansea as being the 7th fastest growing city in the UK next year. Will the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member update council on the jobs being created in 2024 and 2025 and the new developments we expect to see in 2025.

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

The Council's ambitious £1bn regeneration programme is transforming the city and over 1,000 more jobs will be located in the city centre through the new 71-72 Kingsway office development and the reopened Palace Theatre and Albert Hall buildings.

Complementing our regeneration programme, our Business Swansea business grants and business support programme, funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund, is continuing to support local businesses to start up and grow, and by the end of March 2025 it is anticipated that we will have supported the creation of 76 new businesses, created 130 new jobs and safeguarded 150 jobs in Swansea.

Developments that will be progressed in 2025 include:

- **Y Stofa:**

The new multi-purpose community hub in the heart of the city centre is due to be completed in 2025. The development will include the city centre's main library and archive service, alongside a dedicated children and young people's library space, a community creative hub and seminar space. Citizens Advice Bureau Swansea Neath Port Talbot and Careers Wales Swansea have also been announced as scheme tenants.

- **Public Sector Hub**

Planning has recently been granted for the new public sector hub building at the former St David's shopping centre site and construction is due to start in 2025. The new flexible office building will include commercial floorspace for shops and restaurants with the Council occupying office space on the floors above along with other public sector partners. The public sector hub will enable the redevelopment of the current Civic Centre site, with proposals for that currently being worked up by the Council's regeneration partners Urban Splash.

- **Castle Gardens**

Redevelopment of Castle Square is also due to start in 2025. The scheme will include a substantial increase in greenery as well as the introduction of permanent food and drink units, a new water feature designed for play and a TV screen for outdoor events.

- **Lower Swansea Valley**

Due to be completed in 2026, the Lower Swansea Valley project is focussing on restoration of the remaining listed buildings at Hafod Morfa Copperworks and other linked schemes in the Tawe Riverside corridor.

- **Hotel next to Swansea Arena**

Construction is expected to start towards the end of 2025 on a new 150 bedroom hotel next to Swansea Arena that would cater for around 40,000 people a year.

- **Biophilic building (Picton Yard/Oxford Street)**

Completion of the Biophilic building by Hacer developments, a ground-breaking 'living building' scheme which includes an aquaponics centre, exhibition space, offices and residential space. The building will house green walls and green roofs, an urban farm-style greenhouse set over four floors, and educational facility, retail space and a landscaped rooftop garden.

- **Debenhams building**

Discussions are ongoing with potential new tenants for the Debenhams building.

	<p>Combined these developments will help create a strong platform of growth for Swansea's economy through job creation and attracting footfall to support local business and services.</p>
6	<p><b>Councillors Peter Black, Mark Tribe &amp; Wendy Fitzgerald</b></p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member report on what action is intended to counter the large increase in recorded fly tipping incidents between 2022/23 and 2023/24.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</b></p> <p>The following actions are being taken to improve on our current education, engagement and enforcement campaign (3Es).</p> <p>We are continuing to advertise the importance of reporting fly tipping in local communities and where possible, continue to take robust enforcement action.</p> <p>We are working closely with partnership bodies such as South Wales Police, National Resources Wales and Fly tipping Action Wales, social housing bodies and local businesses, to highlight the importance of effective waste disposal and reducing fly tipping.</p> <p>We are applying effective deterrents at fly tipping sites by way of limiting access, public information notices and effective and efficient waste removal and investigation.</p> <p>We regularly promote via social media and face to face public engagement, the Householder Duty of Care and its requirements, with a view to reducing the opportunity of waste being fly tipped.</p> <p>We will continue to increase public awareness of successful enforcement action.</p> <p>We will continue our work with other local authorities to discuss cross boundary working and effective enforcement action as well as learning and sharing of best practice.</p>
7	<p><b>Councillors Fiona Gordon, Patience Bentu, David Phillips &amp; Hannah Lawson</b></p> <p>Swansea Market it an award winning market being recognised as the UK's best indoor market as number of times. Will the Cabinet Member update council on plans to invest in our award winning Market.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services &amp; Performance</b></p> <p>The Market is a key anchor for the City Centre which generates significant footfall and helps differentiate Swansea from other towns and city centres. This role, which is a key theme underpinning the emerging City Centre Placemaking Strategy, is reflected in the investment that has and continues to be made by the Council in this multi-award-winning facility.</p> <p>In 2020 an <i>Improvement Plan</i> was agreed to help ensure the Market continues to fulfil this important socio-economic role and is sustainable in the short, medium and long term.</p>

	<p>The Plan, which is valued at approx. £550,000, has funded the installation of public toilets and a Changing Places facility together with the popular Market Garden communal seating, meeting and events area at the centre of the Market.</p> <p>State of the art public WIFI has also been installed and is nearing commissioning and plans to upgrade the Market entrances to make them more visible are at an advanced stage with the main works due to start in the new year.</p> <p>This investment alongside proactive operational management, a productive tenant/ landlord relationship and an innovative approach to marketing and events, has seen stall occupancy consistently perform at around 94% in comparison to the national markets average of 72%.</p>
8	<p><b>Councillors Peter Black, Mike Day &amp; Lynda James</b></p> <p>When is it intended to consult on the changes to refuse and recycling collections agreed by Cabinet in July 2024.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</b></p> <p>It is intended that the Council will undertake formal public consultation on the future waste strategy early in 2025.</p>
9	<p><b>Councillors Sara Keeton, Rebecca Fogerty, Mike Lewis &amp; Lesley Walton</b></p> <p>Mumbles seafront is receiving a £25m upgrade to its sea defence so communities and businesses are protected for decades to come. Will the Cabinet Member outline what we can expect in terms of improved promenade, public areas, facilities and lighting as part of the major upgrade.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment &amp; Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Whilst the primary function of the project is to safeguard the community from sea level rise and associated flooding, the works have been developed to ensure that Mumbles remains a key tourist destination for the region. The works have been designed in a sympathetic manner to ensure that the unique character of the area is maintained. Through extensive consultation with the community and key stakeholders the design has been developed to support the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater inclusivity for all</li> <li>• Better links to adjacent businesses</li> <li>• Enhanced active travel provision. A widened promenade, new cycle parking, renewed cycle hire facilities.</li> <li>• Additional tree planting to extend the tree lined corridor</li> <li>• Renewed lighting. To include additional bollard lighting and the introduction of new and extended festoon lighting.</li> <li>• New facilities for pop-up kiosks to support local businesses. (electrical connection points provided to remove the need for polluting diesel generators)</li> <li>• The introduction of play facilities along the secondary flood defence embankment.</li> <li>• Enhanced facilities to support the piazza space at Oyster Wharf</li> <li>• A new planting scheme, that introduces local and appropriate plants for the environment that will also encourage greater biodiversity.</li> <li>• New seating, such as inclusive benches, picnic benches, loungers, hammocks.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artwork features introduced into the seawall and floodgates designed by local artist Catrin Jones</li> <li>• Community benefit contributions to local schools</li> <li>• A promenade that is widened at key pinch points and introduces pavement features to provide historic reference to the Mumbles railway</li> <li>• Heritage signage at key locations</li> <li>• New crossing facilities at Mumbles Road</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Part B – No Supplementaries</b></p>
<p>10</p>	<p><b>Councillor Sam Bennett</b></p> <p>Can the Council update us on the results of the survey regarding the dog ban on the beaches.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services &amp; Performance</b></p> <p>The Pre-Engagement Consultation exercise closed on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2024. A total of 4,188 responses to the survey were received. The main results show that 95% of respondents were aware of the current byelaws, 77% of respondents were dog owners, and 77% felt the bylaw needed to be revised.</p> <p>An assessment of the comments submitted through the Pre-Engagement Consultation process has been carried out with the following key themes identified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Perception of unfairness to dog walkers.</li> <li>2. Dissatisfied with the current byelaw.</li> <li>3. A perception of a lack of enforcement and signage.</li> <li>4. Comments around total removal of the ban.</li> <li>5. Support for more dog friendly areas.</li> <li>6. Allowing dogs on the beach on leads only.</li> <li>7. Flexible approach to hours of the day.</li> <li>8. Flexible approach i.e. shorter monthly duration.</li> <li>9. Concern over dog faeces, health impacts.</li> <li>10. Concern over scaring of children and adults.</li> <li>11. Concern over impact upon environmentally sensitive areas i.e. The Blackpill SSSI</li> <li>12. Some comments around keep the byelaw as it is.</li> </ol> <p>A report is being produced for the Cabinet Member to consider and an options appraisal will be developed around the emerging key themes.</p> <p>Once a proposal has been confirmed, the next stage will be for the Council to publish, on its website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An initial written statement setting out the nature, extent and incidence of the issue or problem.</li> <li>• The area in which the issue or problem is being experienced; and</li> <li>• All reasonably practicable options for resolving the issue or problem.</li> </ul>

Following the publication of the written statement there will be a further 12-week consultation on any proposed amendments to the Byelaws concerning Swansea Bay.

Once this consultation process has ended the Council must consider all the responses. A second written statement is to be produced and published to set out a summary of the response received, the decision around any proposed actions and reasons in support of the decision taken.