

**Providing Council with Written Responses to Questions asked at Council  
5 December 2024\* & 30 January 2025**

<p><b>1*</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Stuart Rice</b></p> <p><b>In relation to Minute 73 - Councillor Questions (Q5).</b></p> <p>How much has the empty Debenhams building cost since the Council took it on.</p> <p><b>Response of the Leader</b></p> <p>The former Debenhams store unit was acquired by the Council on 31/03 2023; since that time the total holding costs to date have been £502,325.59 – note this is up to and including 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. These costs consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Rates..... £475,551.82</li> <li>• BID levy .....£13,878.99</li> <li>• Buildings Insurance...£12,894.78</li> </ul> <p>The Rateable Value was reassessed with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 being reduced from £750,000 to £432,500. At prevailing Uniform Business Rates for Wales the Business rates payable would have totalled £823,849.32, and the total holding costs £850,623.09. This reassessment has produced a saving of £348,297.50 for the period from and including 31/03/2023 to 31/03/2025.</p> <p>The project team are aiming to commence stripping out works in May 2025, at which time we will appeal to have the property removed from the rating list. Provided the works meets the legal test required [which we believe will be the case] this will reduce the holding costs from this point to below £20,000 pa at 24/25 figures.</p>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Councillor Mary Jones</b></p> <p><b>In relation to Minute 89 - Councillor Questions (Q5).</b></p> <p>When was the new guidance referred to, in Paragraph 2 of the response introduced. Are there plans to review and introduce new guidance in Wales as planned in England.</p> <p><b>Response of the Cabinet Member for Education &amp; Learning</b></p> <p>The Elective Home Education (EHE) Guidance in Wales was reviewed in 2023 and published on 11 October 2023 <a href="https://www.gov.wales/elective-home-education-guidance">https://www.gov.wales/elective-home-education-guidance</a>. Local Authorities in England are currently working under guidance published in 2019 <a href="#">Elective home education: departmental guidance for local authorities</a>. However, English guidance is currently being reviewed, and there is a potential for changes to the legislation which may trigger a further guidance review in Wales.</p> <p>An EHE Officer attends termly national meetings where the guidance is a standing agenda item and is discussed at length in every meeting. As with all guidance, it will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains purposeful and in line with any changes to legislation. Swansea’s EHE Policy was reviewed and rewritten in 2024 to ensure it accurately reflects the Welsh Assembly Guidance and Council officers will highlight any changes which they feel may be necessary to Welsh Government officials.</p>