



**CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA**  
**DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE**

**To/  
Councillor Mark Child,  
Cabinet Member for Wellbeing &  
Healthy City**

**BY EMAIL**

*Please ask for:  
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Ein Cyf:*

**SPC/2014-15/9**

*Your Ref  
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*Date  
Dyddiad:*

**4 February 2015**

Dear Councillor Child,

**Cabinet Member Question Session – 19 January**

Thank you for your attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 19 January 2015 and answering questions on your work. Thank you for also submitting a written report ahead of the meeting to provide a focus for the session and help us to explore priorities, actions, achievements and impact, in relation to areas of responsibility.

We recognised that this was a new portfolio and noted that responsibilities were cross-cutting, involving joint working with other cabinet members on particular issues to improve wellbeing e.g. social care. You stated that you have spent that last few months developing priorities from the many and varied areas of responsibility.

As stated we are writing to you in order to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the committee, and raise any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

**Local Area Co-ordinators**

The committee was very interested in this new approach (originating from Australia) to increasing community resilience and capacity to support vulnerable people, aiming to prevent, delay or reduce the need for Social Services or Health intervention. You stated that the model suggested that about 15 coordinators may be needed for Swansea and that 3 were soon to be appointed.

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It was not entirely clear however how this model would be applied in practice or how successful it would be in this area, although we appreciated that this was work in development, and evidence of success elsewhere was encouraging. We also asked that you give thought to how Local Area Coordinators would deal with any confidential issues.

You explained that this work differed from that of existing Community Connectors, whose emphasis was on helping people to get involved with groups, organisations and activities in their local area. You acknowledged however that this would need to be kept under review to ensure best use of resources.

We asked for clarification about respective responsibilities given Councillor Jane Harris the lead cabinet member for adult social care. You emphasised that the focus of your work was on prevention, not the provision of social services.

## **Parks**

We were pleased to hear your positive comments about the recent experience of pre-decision scrutiny regarding the proposed lease of Underhill Park to Mumbles Community Association. You stated that the views of the committee and concerns highlighted were very constructive to ensuring that we get things right when it comes to transferring responsibilities for local parks to community groups, be it in Mumbles or anywhere else.

The committee was interested in the impact upon sports clubs who might not want to or be able to enter into any lease / self management arrangements. You were clear about the financial pressures on the authority with regard to maintenance and upkeep and that hire of pitches and facilities could no longer be subsidised, so the council will be looking at full cost recovery. The committee stressed the need for clear communication with sports clubs so that they are fully aware possible financial implications, though we acknowledged that no final budget decisions have been made yet. Nevertheless you advised that organisations awaiting council budget decisions such as community and town councils should have contingency plans in response to any cuts to spending on parks.

You cited examples of where the transfer of sites / facilities were currently being progressed, including Ynystawe Park and Cefn Hengoed Community Leisure Centre, and emphasised the benefits of third sector control that will enable investment and improvements which the Council will not be able to do in the foreseeable future. You confirmed that a toolkit was being developed to provide assistance to those interested in following these examples. There was some concern amongst the committee that passing control to certain groups / associations would not necessarily benefit all users, and would be difficult to help any local clubs who may feel disadvantaged. There was also concern about rushing through proposals without resolving all the issues that will then

arise further down the line. We flagged up the need for assurances about financial governance and capacity to manage, and clarity about liabilities, charges etc. You assured the committee that existing public rights of access to parks would be protected.

### **Community Safety**

We noted that the authority's application for the Purple Flag Award has had positive initial feedback from assessors regarding how we manage the evening and night-time city centre economy and ensure a safe and healthy night out. We were informed that the final decision was awaited. You felt that the bad press on Wind Street was not justified and that it was being well managed.

The committee was particularly interested in the licensing policy in the city and issues relating to the 'cumulative impact', in other words treating each pub/bar license on its merit with a presumption of refusal unless it can be shown not to be adding to the cumulative impact. It remains a source of debate as to whether such a policy is a positive thing or inhibits business. We asked whether the council was planning to review the policy for the city centre. You confirmed that the current policy was up for review in January 2016.

### **Giving Every Child the Best Start in Life**

We discussed your work in supporting young children and readiness for school, and aim to lower the development assessment gap. We agreed it was one of the most important things we can do in Swansea to make the biggest difference. We were interested in the citywide strategy which you were developing to focus on the 0-3 age group and specific actions that might be necessary.

We would be grateful for your comments on the issues raised in this letter. It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 25 February so that it can be included in the agenda of a future committee meeting at the earliest opportunity.

We look forward to meeting you again to follow up on portfolio developments and hearing about achievements and impact.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR MARY JONES**

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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