



**To/
Councillor Andrea Lewis
Cabinet Member for Housing,
Energy & Building Services**

BY EMAIL

cc: Cabinet Members

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Housing, Energy & Building Services following the meeting of the Committee on 13 November 2017. It is about a proposed cabinet decision on the More Homes Pilot Scheme.

Dear Councillor Lewis,

**Pre-decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Report:
More Homes Pilot Scheme – Milford Way and Parc Y Helyg Sites**

The Scrutiny Programme Committee met on 13 November to consider the report that you are presenting to Cabinet on 16 November, and give a view on the proposed decision.

We thank you and relevant officers for attending our meeting to present the report and answer our questions. This is a matter which we have keenly awaited, having asked you on a number of occasions for information about costs.

We discussed progress with the first pilot house building scheme at Milford Way, and final costs / financial implications. We noted that your report also sought cabinet approval of the release of funds for enabling works at the second pilot site at Parc Y Helyg.

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Firstly the Committee agreed that it was fitting to congratulate you and all those involved in delivering the first new council houses for nearly 40 years – homes which are built to high specification and will lift families out of fuel poverty, which is highly commended. We acknowledged that this was a first but significant step forward which will inform the longer term strategy to deliver more affordable and sustainable homes in Swansea.

Although we debated the value for money, cost comparisons and lessons learned from the first pilot scheme and possible approaches to the second site, in terms of the overall decision that the cabinet is being asked to take, the Committee has no issue with the recommendations.

Indeed we welcome a further report on which options should be progressed at Parc Y Helyg, and expected costs. You explained that that report will explore in more detail and provide appraisal of different options comparing build based on 'Passivhaus' standard and, what the report refers to as, a 'Swansea Standard', both in relation to costs and quality. We intend to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on that report, and it would be helpful if you can provide indication of when this is likely to come forward.

Looking at future work we highlighted the following which should be carefully considered:

- Clarity about external works/costs at the outset - one issue which concerned committee members was the extensive drainage works that were required at the Milford Way site to comply with Welsh Water restrictions in the area, and significant impact on overall costs. This was something that should have been anticipated given known issues regarding the Burry Inlet, which have already hampered other developments. You agreed that when making future decisions about sites the likely cost of external works must be considered upfront.
- Greater use of local suppliers – we acknowledged issues with the supply chain in sourcing specialist products, which meet Passivhaus certification standards, that prevented local suppliers from tendering for the work. More should be done to maximise local benefits from future work, without necessarily compromising on principles and standards – supporting suppliers to support us in future projects if we are clear about the specifications we require.
- Clarity about the financial savings derived from these energy efficient homes – we felt that overall costs should be considered alongside the long term savings that would result from the energy efficient build e.g. financial savings to tenants from lower fuel consumption. We felt it would be helpful if this can be quantified in future reports to provide a better picture when assessing costs and benefits. We supported a full evaluation of the properties that would help provide such information.

A number of committee members have been able to visit the Milford Way site and recommended a visit to others. We would be pleased if you were able to arrange for another guided visit for members so that those who have not been able to visit have opportunity to do so.

Finally, I am unable to attend the cabinet meeting on Thursday to feedback the committee's views as contained in this letter. However, the vice-chair, Councillor Terry Hennegan will attend in my absence.

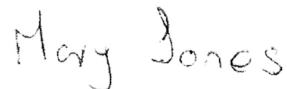
Your Response

We would be grateful for a written response to this letter so that the Committee is informed of the decision taken by Cabinet and its consideration of the views expressed by the Committee, whether accepted or rejected.

Specifically we would appreciate confirmation about timescales for your cabinet report about the design standards at Parc Y Helyg, and whether further arrangements can be made for members to look at the Milford Way scheme.

It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 6 December. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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