



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

**To/
Councillor David Hopkins
Cabinet Member for Environment &
Transportation**

BY EMAIL

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SPC/2016-17/8

30 November 2016

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation following the meeting of the Committee on 14 November 2016. It is about Waste Management and Recycling, Bus Services, Parking Enforcement, Park and Ride Provision, Street / Highway Works, Road Safety, Tawe Barrage, Dog Fouling, and Street Lighting.

Dear Councillor Hopkins,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 14 November

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 14 November 2016 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation. Thank you for providing a written paper, that gave some headlines from this cabinet portfolio, in support of your appearance.

We wanted to explore priorities, actions, achievements and impact, in relation to your areas of responsibility. Amongst the things you highlighted to the committee included work on the various commissioning reviews across your portfolio, the 48hr pothole initiative, recycling performance, savings generated by retendering of many home to school transport routes, and the recent signing of a Quality Bus Partnership with First Cymru. Overall you felt there have been a number of positive achievements however warned of the challenges ahead to maintain services.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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

Waste Management & Recycling

Black Bags:

We asked about the impact following the decision that black bags would no longer be accepted at certain Household Waste Recycling Centres, such as any increase in fly tipping. We heard that there has been careful planning and preparation for this change, including a phased approach, targeting of certain areas and education, which has resulted in no significant increase in fly tipping. However you assured us that this is being closely monitored.

Some members have seen fly tipped black bags and asked about how they are dealt with. You explained that bags would not be collected without first trying to identify where they had come from, and this was something that could only be done in a controlled manner by trained enforcement officers, not councillors or members of the public – for health and safety and to ensure it does not weaken the case for possible enforcement action. You told us that the Council will always seek to prosecute offenders and supported naming and shaming in the local media as a deterrent.

Another issue raised concerned the 3 black bag limit for households and the difficulty those involved in community litter picks had, as it added to their waste. It was explained that allowances are made for householders with special circumstances but in the case of litter picks, which are of course encouraged, advised that special collections can be arranged with the department. Blue bags were usually used in such circumstances. One thing we agreed on was the responsibility of people not to litter, and the need for both education and enforcement.

Pink Bags:

The issues with current plastic recycling bags are well known. We asked about plans to expand the trial reusable pink bags for plastic kerbside collection, across the Authority. We heard that the roll out would likely take place early in the new financial year, following completion of necessary procurement process.

Agency workers:

We referred to the Commissioning Review on Waste Management and the intended reduction in the use of agency workers. We asked about the thinking behind this and benefits. You confirmed that was not about cutting staff. You explained that the review had shown an overreliance on agency staff and a clear need for more permanent staff. This was not just a decision based on finances, but about having a more effective workforce and improving

retention. Exact numbers were not yet agreed. We understood that there may still be a need for some agency workers to deal with certain peaks.

Bus Services

Quality Bus Partnership:

The committee was very pleased to hear that a Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) has recently been signed with First Cymru. It was one of the key recommendations made in our scrutiny inquiry on public transport 3 years ago, so progress on this is very welcome.

We hoped that it will provide a platform for working together to ensure local bus services deliver. We asked what benefits you envisaged and whether it will genuinely be a 2-way process of engagement and dialogue, where the Council will have some leverage to improve the quality of services and facilities.

We understand that there will be a first partnership meeting shortly and look forward to progress and seeing the difference that the QBP will make. You felt that the QBP will provide much scope for improvement, and should allow the Council to have much earlier input into any service changes, but ultimately First Cymru, which is the dominant service provider in the area, was a commercial operation.

Request Stops:

Some members asked you to clarify with bus providers what the position is with regard to request stops. They were aware of concerns from residents about inconsistent approaches and less flexibility, seemingly driver led, as to whether or not a bus would be able to pick up / drop off on request – a particular issue for older people. You agreed to take this up with the bus companies.

Parking Enforcement

We shared with you concern about vehicles being parked on pavements causing obstruction particularly for pedestrians, causing inconvenience or danger, especially for those in wheelchairs or with visual impairments, and people with prams / push chairs. Committee members explained the frustrations experienced by those calling for action about who to turn to – Council officers saying that it is the responsibility of the Police, the Police saying it is the responsibility of the Council. Members saw this as a particular issue for routes to school and in the streets around the DVLA. We understand that you are in talks with the DVLA about parking issues and possible solutions to current problems.

You told us that it depended on whether the road is subject to a Traffic Regulation Order. Where one was in force, the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers can issue penalty charge notices. Otherwise it would be a matter for the Police to enforce.

We felt that clear guidance needed to be issued to relevant officers to remind them of respective responsibilities, so that everyone understands what can be done about this problem.

Park and Ride Provision

We referred to the closure of the Fforestfach park and ride site but asked about options for future provision in the part of Swansea, due to the projected increase in new housing. You explained that the site was in the wrong place, without necessary priority measures, and heavily underutilised. We noted that the closure resulted in a cost saving of £200k per annum. As far as future provision goes you told us that as demand rises the need for a site will be revisited, ideally with better links to the M4 and dedicated routes to the city centre.

Street / Highway Works

Following a question there was also discussion to better understand why certain street / highways works (for example works requested by councillors) would need to be carried out only by the authority. We were told that this was because of the Council's duty of care and liability with regard to the public highway, but were assured that the cost of works in-house was competitive compared to private contractors.

Road Safety

We spoke about the introduction of 30mph speed limits across the length of Carmarthen Road, give the incidence of accidents. While it may represent an annoyance to some drivers, we were happy to hear that it has made this road much safer for the local community, and seemed to be working well.

Tawe Barrage

We asked about the ongoing maintenance of the barrage and spend, and a statement on its condition. You told us that there is a maintenance budget in place and that costs were offset by the income generated by the Marina. You stated that a long term asset management plan for the barrage was being prepared so likely future costs are clearly understood. We agreed that this was necessary.

Dog Fouling

We discussed this the last time we met you (May) and had asked about the penalty notices issued in relation to dog fouling. In your response letter (July) we noted that 5 fixed penalty notices had been served this year, 3 of those on beaches. We understood the difficulties in catching offenders, but welcomed efforts to train up more and more officers working in parks and communities to carry out enforcement. Again, the committee felt that an approach involving naming and shaming would be positive.

Street Lighting

The committee would like to know how many lights are out and how many have been switched off. You agreed to provide this information in writing.

Your Response

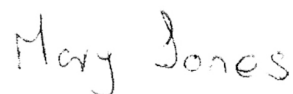
In your response we would appreciate your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically refer to our request for you to:

- write to relevant officers (Council and Police) about the obstruction on highways / pavements and respective responsibilities to ensure clarity about appropriate enforcement action;
- raise the issue of inconsistent approaches and flexibility regarding 'request stops' with local bus service providers;
- confirm maintenance spending on the Tawe Barrage; and
- provide the information about street lighting not working or switched off.

Please provide your response by 21 December. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available committee meeting.

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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