



**To/
Councillor June Burtonshaw
Cabinet Member for Future
Generations**

BY EMAIL

cc: Cabinet Members

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Scrutiny

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SPC/2017-18/13

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Future Generations following the meeting of the Committee on 12 February 2018. It is about the Transfer of Management of Allotments.

Dear Councillor Burtonshaw,

**Pre-decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Report:
Transfer of Management of Allotments from the City and County of
Swansea to Management Associations**

The Scrutiny Programme Committee met on 12 February to consider the report that you are presenting to Cabinet on 15 February, and give a view on the proposed decision.

Thank you for attending our meeting to present the report and explain the rationale behind the decision, and answer our questions. Your report recommends the transfer of existing Allotment sites to Member Allotment Associations with total management responsibility – identified as Option 2 in the report. We understood that this was consistent with the aims of the Sustainable Swansea Programme and Community Asset Transfer Policy – a decision that would remove any subsidy of the service and ongoing costs to the Council, and ensure greater ownership and control of allotment sites for the plot holders via associations. Following consultation with representatives from all the allotment sites you told us that there is broad acceptance and enthusiasm about this proposal.

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During the discussion we established from you that:

- There is no intention to put allotments into private management.
- Allotment Associations would take over the total running of allotment sites including the setting of rent levels to plot holders, and responsibility for insurance and maintenance.
- Allotment Associations would be recommended to be affiliated to a recognised national body, e.g. National Allotment Society.
- Site surveys will be carried out by the Council to highlight areas of concern on each site so that they can be considered / addressed prior to transfer of total management responsibility, e.g. knotweed, hedges / tree maintenance and boundary issues. You stated that the intention was to resolve issues prior to transfer.
- The Council will respond, in accordance with the Allotments Act, if there is any increase in demand for allotments and would work with Allotment Associations if there is interest in further plots. However, we queried whether there was in fact already a waiting list for allotments, and you undertook to find out and write to us with information about the waiting list and the areas concerned.
- The Vetch was a Community Growing Scheme, and not classified as an Allotment Site.

Our Views

Whilst the Committee is supportive of Option 2 a number of issues were raised about future control which Committee Members felt Cabinet should be clear about before proceeding. The Committee was concerned about who or what would regulate the activities of any Allotment Associations to ensure that they conduct themselves in an open, transparent, fair and reasonable manner. We would be concerned if anybody felt in the future that they were excluded from plot holding without good reason or other bad practice was evident. We would expect that each association has a clear constitution. Similarly, what would happen if an Allotment Association fails? What process would then follow? Would the National Body (if affiliated) step in? Would Council take back control? Cabinet needs to be clear about what role or powers the Council will have in any of this.

The contents of this letter will be verbally presented to the Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

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.

In your reply we would be grateful if you could address the issues raised about future control and also provide information about waiting lists.

It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 7 March. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available committee meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Jones

COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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