

Councillor Terry Hennegan
Vice-Chair – Scrutiny Programme
Committee

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Andrea Lewis
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Our Ref: AL/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 27th September 2018

Dear Terry

Thank you for your letter dated 11th September 2018. I am glad you found my written submission of use.

In relation to the Homes as Power Stations issue you raised, I can confirm that £15 M has been allocated from City Deal funding, subject to an acceptable business case being made. The headline figures for the Homes as Power Stations project are summarised below

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
City Deal	£2,000,000	£4,000,000	£5,000,000	£3,750,000	£250,000	£15,000,000
Private	£23,075,000	£47,675,000	£73,050,000	£102,600,000	£129,500,000	£375,900,000
Other programmes	£6,425,000	£14,075,000	£22,200,000	£31,400,000	£45,500,000	£114,600,000
Total	£31,500,000	£65,750,000	£100,250,000	£137,750,000	£170,250,000	£505,500,000

Since I provided you with my written information, there has been an update to report regarding affordable housing provision at a national level. The Welsh Government have launched a review of the affordable housing supply in Wales. The Council has submitted evidence and views from a Swansea perspective to feed into the review.

Enclosed are the previous responses to questions asked at the meeting for the benefit of Committee Members.

Empty Properties

The baseline empty dwellings in the private sector for 1st April 2018 was 1,859 (this does not include categories such as second homes, where the property is owned by a social landlord, or the police, armed forces, university, local authority, church or NHS, commercial properties or properties which have been taken out of banding.)

Timetable for Sprinkler Installation

Jeffrey's court completed May 2018.

Mathew Street 2 blocks will be completed by the middle of October 2018.

Clyne Court 3 blocks will be starting in October 2018 completion by March 2019.

Rheidol Court starting March 2019 completion May 2019.

Griffith John Street 2 blocks starting June 2019 completion November 2019.

Croft Street 2 blocks included within major refurbishment start date tbc but envisaged to be around October 2019.

Housing Commissioning Review

August 2018 – March 2019

Scoping document was considered by Financial services transformation group and Scrutiny in August

Stakeholder engagement - Communication with all staff, Members and trade union commenced in August

Staff focus groups set up and work underway to review service data, identify outcomes for customers etc August - October

Customer engagement taking place during Sept/October (to include specific tenant consultation panels and surveys at District Housing Offices)

Ongoing communication with local ward members via the Area Housing Managers

Aim to report findings to Cabinet before the end of the financial year (which would include pre scrutiny consideration/process)

Aim to implement findings in 2019/20 (however for some services this may vary dependant on the diversity/scale of the implementation etc)

Green Transport and Green Vehicle Adoption

The adoption and implementation of Electric Vehicles (EV) and the associated supporting infrastructure, provides an excellent opportunity for Swansea Council to improve air quality, resulting in improvement to health and allows the authority to support a sustainable transport provision for the City & County of Swansea.

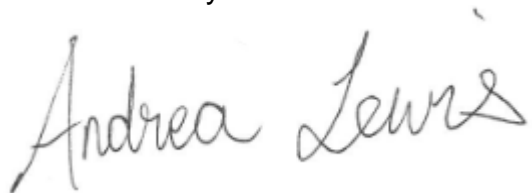
Transportation Officers are engaged in activities to provide Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI). The preliminary work is focussed on the establishment of a strategy which will form the foundations to direct the Council's preferred strategy for the delivery of this infrastructure in the coming years. Officers are working with their counterparts in the other Local Authorities in South West Wales (Carmarthenshire County Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and Pembrokeshire County Council) to deliver a strategy which benefits the City Region as a whole and offers continuity in provision across Local Government borders.

It is expected that once the strategy has established the parameters of locations, charging standards and business models, that Officers will begin grant funding applications and tender procedures to deliver the infrastructure in the coming months.

There have been no further developments of note regarding the other subject areas listed in your letter.

If you have any further questions or queries, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping underline.

COUNCILLOR ANDREA LEWIS
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES & ENERGY

Written response from Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy to question about the private rented sector in conjunction with the rollout of Universal Credit.

We work with a large number of private rented sector (PRS) landlords who are willing to accept households claiming benefit but it's fair to say many were concerned about the introduction of the Universal Credit benefit system. Given that it's paid 4 weeks in arrears and the administrative issues there were at the start of the rollout, landlords were clearly anxious about non-payment of rent and increasing rent arrears. We have a dedicated Support Worker allocated to supporting households in PRS accommodation and since December 2017, she reports that the majority of her work centres around addressing issues arising from Universal Credit claims. The system of processing a claim appears to be difficult for vulnerable households to find their way through and therefore it's essential there is assistance to do so.

Unfortunately there are landlords, who we have worked with, who will now accept claimants of Housing Benefit but not Universal Credit. They report a steep rise in rent arrears caused by the payment being made in arrears and direct to the tenant. However given that the intention is that Universal Credit will be rolled out to all households by March 2022, it's a matter that the PRS will have to tackle.

We have specific actions in our Homelessness Strategy to monitor the reasons for loss of rented accommodation, to better understand the drivers behind this cause of homelessness and also to work with DWP, Housing Benefit and Poverty and Prevention Services to identify households at risk of homelessness because of welfare reform.