



**To/
Councillor Mark Child
Cabinet Member for Care, Health &
Ageing Well**

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Committee on 10 February 2020. It is about the Budget, Supporting People, Hospital to Home Initiative, Additional Learning Needs, West Glamorgan Regional Partnership, and Public Services Board.

Dear Councillor Child,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 10 February

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 10 February 2020 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Care, Health & Ageing Well. We also thank Head of Adult Services, Alex Williams, for his support and contributions to the session.

We are writing to you at a time of national emergency and hope this letter finds you well. We extend our thanks to all those supporting our most vulnerable people and ensuring the continuity of social care to those in need. Although scrutiny meetings are currently suspended until further notice, because of the coronavirus pandemic, we wanted to get this letter out to you, as we would normally do, hoping that in due course we can resume our work.

We appreciate you providing a written paper in support of your appearance at the Committee meeting. The Q & A session gave us an opportunity to explore priorities and achievements in relation to your areas of responsibility.

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This letter reflects on what we learnt from the discussion, shares the views of the Committee, and highlights any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues are summarised below:

Budget

You reported that Social Services continue to work under severe budgetary pressures due to austerity and an increasing number of people needing long-term support due to an ageing population with associated increased frailty. Whilst making progress in efficiency, prevention and reablement, you reported that the savings made by achieving these improvements lags behind the impact of increasing pressures.

You were pleased, however, to inform the Committee that the department was coming in close to budget this year and thanked all the staff in the department who continue to do good work. You stressed that it has been hard and will not get any easier next year.

We asked about the effect of a 5% increase in care charges and the inflationary pressures on those who struggle to afford it. You explained that the Social Services Charging Policy was reviewed annually and if circumstances change for an individual. However, you highlighted to the Committee that there is a cap on charges for most people, especially those receiving high amounts of care who will not see any difference in their contribution.

Supporting People

We discussed the volatility in the private sector around supporting people contracting and asked whether things have improved.

We were told that this has always been a volatile area of social care, and will continue to be for some time, however the focus has been on ensuring that care packages stay intact while any changes happen. We noted that the relevant Policy Development Committee is looking at social care and wellbeing, and how best to diversify the market to see how we could have greater number and types of providers involved.

We heard that the commissioning programme within domiciliary care is now being divided up into specific areas to enable provision of packages more easily for those in more rural areas of, for example, Gower and Mawr. These things will help put more steps into improve effects of volatility in market.

The Committee recognised one of the issues is the difficulty providers have in recruiting and retaining care staff, as it is an area where pay and prospects are limited. In your view, a good carer career pathway needed to be put in place that will help attract and keep staff. An example of community-based projects was also raised; this is where communities themselves working with

charities and others to provide services, some examples cited included those in Somerset, Monmouthshire and Pembrokeshire.

Hospital to Home Initiative

We asked about the Hospital to Home initiative (H2H) and how it was going to differ from what is already in existence, and how it was going to improve bed blocking. We noted that this promotes timely discharge from hospital to home and home-based assessment / reablement and the project went live on 10th December 2019.

You reiterated that the whole purpose of 'Hospital to Home' is to reduce bed blocking, and differs because people are assessed when they get home. You explained that a short-term care package is put in place as soon as they get home and then this is assessed before agreeing longer-term support. This enabled people to get back to their homes, where they want to be, much quicker and frees up hospital beds. You reported that the number of individuals supported through reablement following launch of H2H is up by 50% across the region with a higher proportion supported same day as identified medically fit.

However, you stressed that it does need extra investment and there is currently a joint bid in with the Welsh Government, by the Council, Swansea Bay University Health Board and Neath Port Talbot Council. You stated that there is a need for more occupational therapist support, though this was currently not prohibiting moving things forward.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

We asked about arrangements for ALN in response to the Welsh Government transformation programme and new legislation. We understand that the programme transforms the separate systems for special educational needs (SEN) in schools and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in further education, to create a unified system for supporting learners from 0 to 25 with ALN.

The Committee asked about co-ordination as this issue affects the whole council and other agencies, not just education. We were interested in how the Council was working together to address the changes and ensure we can comply with this Bill.

You assured that Committee that high-level co-ordination was taking place both within the Council and at a regional level. You undertook to provide a fuller written answer to this issue, including how we are joining up services around ALN, and who is making sure all those things are happening e.g. who has oversight of this as a whole? Please provide the fuller answer when you are able to do so, as in the circumstances we understand if you are unable to deal with this in the usual timescales for response.

West Glamorgan Regional Partnership

We raised with you questions around scrutiny of the Regional Partnership (formerly known as the Western Bay Health & Social Care Partnership). Whilst we have discussed the activities of the partnership within our Scrutiny Performance Panels, in so far as they relate to service provision in Swansea there is, as yet, no overarching scrutiny of the regional partnership. Whilst not an issue for you directly as Cabinet Member, it is something that ought to be discussed within the Regional Partnership Board, on which you are a member as the Leader's representative, and facilitated.

We noted that the withdrawal of Bridgend Council from the partnership has presented an opportunity to restructure and reform resulting in a simpler and more effective programme, and that, significantly, housing organisations have now been included in the partnership board in order to achieve a more integrated approach.

Public Services Board

The Committee asked you about the PSB's well-being objectives, including Live Well, Age Well and Working with Nature, and difference made / impact on your work.

We noted that you chair the Objective Delivery Group for Live Well, Age Well. You reported that work within the Care, Health and Well-being portfolio was critical to the delivery of Swansea's Local Well-being Plan. In particular, the 'Live Well, Age Well' objective takes a whole life approach to ageing well and aims to help people to plan and live well in order to age well.

You stated that there has definitely been an impact in the way people from outside are looking at some of the work being done here for example the intergenerational work which has been praised by the Alzheimer's Society. You added that Swansea has a fantastic variety of natural environments and it is about them being enjoyed and used by everyone. In your view, the PSB brought all the professionals together around the table to discuss the key priorities, which is always beneficial. The difference between the footprint of the PSB and the Local Health Board was raised, and the possibility that the PSB may in time become a regional body.

Public Questions

The Committee had received a question from member of the public which concerned the provision of care plans, health and safety documents, manual handling training, and the process around adaptations to meet the needs of disabled persons and their carer. You undertook to provide a written response on the specific issues raised by the member of the public, and I am pleased that you did so on 19 February. The following response from you was forwarded to the member of the public:

'Wherever possible, Adult Services strives to ensure that all adults under our care have a current signed off care plan and the necessary health and safety arrangements are in place to support that care plan. When this is not possible, for example when there is disagreement between Adult Services and the family of the cared for person, Adult Services needs to satisfy itself that the individual is safe. If there is any concern over safety, matters will be addressed via the statutory safeguarding procedures.'

The ADAPT Project is a partnership between Swansea Council, Coastal Housing Group, Pobl and Family Housing Association which enables social landlords to make the best possible use of the adapted properties in Swansea. A common register is maintained to ensure the best match of vacant properties with each households medical needs. The Council does not specifically build properties for individuals, but when adapted bungalows are built they are allocated in the same way through the Adapt waiting list. Once a property has been offered and accepted through ADAPT, properties can be further adapted to meet the individual needs of the household.'

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter, but would be grateful for more information about the co-ordination of Additional Learning Needs, however do not require you to respond with a formal letter. An email from yourself in due course will be sufficient on this occasion.

We will then include our letter and any correspondence received in response in the agenda of the next available Committee meeting. We will arrange to follow up on portfolio developments and invite you to a future Committee meeting in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Jones

COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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