

Development & Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching remit of the Panel is to be responsible for ongoing monitoring of Council performance in relation to development and regeneration, including the ‘health’ of the city centre, wider economic development across Swansea and discussion about progress on the Swansea Bay City Deal.

2. Introduction

The Panel is focused on contributing to the ongoing development and regeneration of Swansea by acting as a critical friend for the Cabinet, and helping to ensure accountability.

3. Key Activities

Since the last update to SPC in April 2021, the Panel has held three meetings, the next being due in January 2022. In addition, Panel Members also attended a site visit to view the new Swansea Arena and Bridge development. Meetings so far have resulted in several Convener’s letters sent to the Cabinet Member(s) regarding the Dashboard Report.

Meeting date	Topics
1 July 2021	Dashboard Report: Project Update
7 September 2021	Swansea University: Update on City Deal Investment
	Dashboard Report: Project Update
October 2021	Arena Site – Group Tours
2 November 2021	City Centre Travel Plan update
	Dashboard Report: Project Update

4. Achievements / Impact

The Dashboard Report: Project Update

As a way of providing a regular ‘health check’ of the development projects, the Panel receives the departmental update report at each meeting. This works well and allows an overview from relevant officers of all regeneration projects, providing a quick risk check of each one, highlighting major issues/delays or successes.

Individual Project Updates

In order to provide an in-depth level of scrutiny for the Panel, each meeting will also focus on a specific project in Swansea. The Panel discussed and decided on the topics for the year 2021/22, which range from Swansea University to the City Centre Travel Plan. This allows for a more intense exploration of a project and strikes the balance between checking progress of development and regeneration in general, and contributing in a more detailed manner on a specific project.

Letters to Cabinet Members

A reflection on some of the observations the Panel has made are outlined below:

Copr Bay Phase 1:

- *Bridge: We were interested to hear about the Bridge and the finishing touches being added to the floor and interior. Members queried whether visual disability groups have been consulted and officers confirmed that consultations had taken place, the subsequent views having been taken account of in the design and installation.*
- *Hotel: Officers explained that the Council is exploring funding options to move the Hotel development forward. The Panel expressed some concerns over the delay in finalising the funding for the hotel development. Members also queried whether this would operate through a UK-based company and officers confirmed that the current preferred operator is a well-known Hotel brand with international links. Officers explained that the Hotel development would be constructed alongside the Arena, the site having been designed to provide works access when needed.*
- *The Panel questioned the overall progress of the Hotel development. Officers explained that finance and funding discussions are on-going, and that the Council is considering other alternative options that may become necessary.*
- *Arena: It was pleasing to hear that that leasing of units is progressing well. Officers explained that all units around the Arena are under offer and the Council is also close to finalising legal agreements for the Pavilion operator. Members questioned whether these would be local companies. Officers confirmed that all Council-let units would be local businesses, as the Council purposely did not target national operators, choosing to engage with local food / beverage operators on this particular opportunity.*
- *Members queried the maintenance of the LED bulbs on the Arena and who will be responsible for maintenance. Officers confirmed this is outlined within the business plan and that the management responsibility for the external façade is the Council's.*
- *We heard that work continues to progress well on the Copr Bay Phase 1 project, despite challenges faced by Covid cases on-site. Officers explained that LED Panels are nearing the completion stage and that façade testing is to commence shortly. Officers explained to us that parkland / landscaping work continues and that temporary commercial units will be added within the park area.*

Swansea Central North:

- *We heard that the Government Property Agency (GPA) is exploring locations for employment hubs, having identified a number of departments who may wish to occupy the site in Swansea. Members queried where exactly the hub would be located and officers explained this would be adjacent to the multi-storey car park opposite the Arena. Panel Members queried whether the jobs would be newly created or relocated. Officers explained that some jobs may relocate from other areas of the locality, and some would be completely new. Officers suggested this would also benefit the City Centre by bringing a critical mass of employees and associated footfall into the City Centre.*

Swansea University:

- *The Panel heard about City Deal developments, in the context of Swansea University and their partnership with Swansea Council and the Local Health Board. The Panel heard about the aspirations for investment in the MedTech and SportsTech sector, aiming to provide opportunities for companies to collaborate with Swansea University.*
- *Under proposals for the Sketty and Morriston University sites, we heard that the Swansea University developments are expected to foster a group of up to 300 firms, and circa 1000 jobs, creating a space for companies to work alongside clinicians, advancing new treatments and technology. We understand that Swansea University will also work with the Local Health Board and Swansea Council to improve road access and infrastructure around the Morriston site.*
- *The Panel queried the total amount of City Deal funding being allocated to Swansea University and, separately, Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). Officers undertook to provide further clarification on this breakdown, which has now been received with thanks. Members also note that the UWTSD original 'Box Village' scheme will not proceed as originally planned (part-funded by the private sector) and will now be replaced with a new scheme funded by UWTSD.*

71/72 The Kingsway:

- *The Panel heard that a contractor has been selected for the 71/72 The Kingsway project, and contract discussions ongoing. We understand that the reduced supply of materials is an on-going and significant aspect of all construction projects presently, having regard to on-going effects of the pandemic. Members raised queries over the impacts on costs of such supply issues. Officers explained that fixed-price contracts will not be affected, and as such this project will remain unaffected in that respect.*

Wind Street:

- *It was pleasing to hear that good progress is being made with the production of a flythrough of the Wind Street project, with completion anticipated for November. The Panel heard that three Rainbow Crossings have been proposed to Cabinet, encompassing a pedestrian crossing with rainbow road markings. Members queried whether improvements have been made to building facades along Wind Street and*

the improvement in street furniture layout. Officers explained that grants may be available to occupiers through other schemes, to improve façades, and that consultation was underway as to street furniture layout.

- *The Panel questioned whether there would be visible security presence on Wind Street. Officers confirmed that the possibility of employing extra City Centre Rangers was being considered by the Council. Officers also reiterated that the Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU) had been consulted in project designs.*

5. Work Programme

Work Programme for remainder of 2021/22	
25 January 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Swansea Business Improvement District (BID) 2. Foreshore Developments 3. Dashboard Report – Project Update
8 March 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Impact of Brexit on Rural Development Programme and Funding Update (Post-2023) 2. Economic Regeneration Strategy 3. Auditor General for Wales Review of Town Centre Regeneration 4. Dashboard Report – Project Update