

Council – 4 May 2023

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1 Councillor Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery

The condition of roads in Swansea is a bit of a problem

- a. Does the Cabinet Member agree with the Wales Online article (1st April 2023) that Swansea has some of the most potholed roads in Wales.
- b. What is the average life expectancy of a pothole repair that is carried out under the councils 48 hour pothole guarantee.
- c. Please could the Cabinet Member provide a full list of the roads that are due to be resurfaced in 2023/4 (including those that have been brought forward from 2024/5 and future planned years).

[I drove what has to be one of the most potholed roads in Wales and it's absolutely awful - Paul Turner - Wales Online](#)



[I drove what has to be one of the most potholed roads in Wales](#)

Bet you think you know one that's worse though

www.walesonline.co.uk

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

A.

No – I don't agree with the views of Wales Online. Moreover, I think the video purposely ignores the excellent work carried out by the highways team elsewhere in the city.

I do not believe that Swansea has the most potholed road in Wales and doubt that the reporter has driven on every road in the country to support such a statement. Moreover, I think the video purposely ignores the excellent work carried out by the highways team elsewhere in the city.

We have not received any additional roads funding from UK Government via WG this year despite the treasury receiving billions of pounds from motorists in fuel duty and car tax. That money should be coming to local authorities, so we are able to resurface roads and make repairs more often. At present we have had zero, which

Swansea motorists will rightly be outraged by. It is appalling and leave the local authority in a very difficult position.

Despite this we have announced over £5m of investment in our roads and will continue with making repairs to roads, undertaking partial resurfacing and delivering our roads resurfacing programme.

An annual condition survey has maintained an overall steady state. There was however extensive damage to the roads over the winter period caused by freezing of wet roads. This has led to an increase in the number of pot holes which are being dealt with as they are reported with record numbers being fixed. Swansea remain the only Council in the UK to offer a 48 hours reactive surface for non-safety pot holes. The bulk of the defects being reported are surface issues not strictly pot holes, they are not considered dangerous but are very noticeable and give a poor ride. A programme of work is being put in place to deal with these issues. The Authority has also increased funding to Highways for both of the next 2 years to allow resurfacing of some of the most effected roads.

B.

The vast majority of the pot holes repaired under the pot hole scheme are permanent repairs. A survey of the repairs carried out gave a 95% durability. The small number of pot holes that do fail are generally too shallow to be repaired properly and are not safety defects.

C.

Drive, Killay

- Birchgrove Road, Birchgrove (Phase 4)
- Phillip Street, Manselton
- Mumbles Road (Ashleigh Road to Derwen Fawr)
- Valley Way, Llansamlet
- Heol Ddu, Treboeth
- Gors Avenue, Townhill (Gors Community School)
- Gors Avenue, Townhill (junction Townhill Road)
- Tycoch Road, Tycoch
- Station Road/Blodwen Terrace, Penclawdd
- Middle Road, Gendros - (mini R/A junc. Upper Gendros Crescent)
- Llewitha Phase 1 (Hospital Road to Llewitha)
- Junction 47 Penllergaer
- Church Road/Walters Road, Llansamlet
- Gorwydd Road, Gowerton (Phase 1)

Small Resurfacing Schemes (SRS)

- Nantong Way, Llansamlet
- Goetre Fawr Road, Killay
- B4295 Penclawdd Road/Gowerton Road
- Belle Vue, Penclawdd

2 **Councillors Lesley Walton, Wendy Lewis, Mike Lewis & Mike White**

Can you explain our progress on working with partners to engage hard to reach learners.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Well-being

The Lifelong Learning Service (LLS) continues to work with a range of partners to bring learning opportunities to the wider population of Swansea.

The Adult Community Learning (ACL) programme is open to all citizens of age 16 and over. Classes take place in a range of different venues across Swansea communities. In addition to the programme advertised on the Swansea Council website, LLS had undertaken and has plans for further learning opportunities delivered and organised in partnership with others. These include:

- Communities for Work - taster sessions are underway to challenge people to consider setting up a small business from home. We support the delivery of any bespoke training identified by participants. Support for ESOL Classes via ALPS (Adult Learning Partnership Swansea). Engagement work for Communities For Work Plus have included activities such as Christmas on a Budget;
- African Community Centre (ACC) – Conversational English support for participants going into care work;
- Pobl - Cooking on a Budget – for older people living in Llys y Werin and Llys y Vetch;
- Mawr communities - T/Digital literacy for the communities of Felindre, Garnswllt and Craigcefnparc;
- Rhoosili Community Council - ongoing discussions with regards to digital learning;
- Mencap & Llamau - discreet delivery to support service users;
- Local Area Coordinators - responded to requests in areas to deliver sessions and encourage capacity building from within the community;
- Gower College Swansea (GCS) - increasing bi-lingual and Welsh medium delivery in both ACL provision and Family Learning;
- Adult Learning Wales (ALW) - additional woodworking class, responding to increased demands;
- Swansea Libraries - Digital Creativity programme delivered to support people working in the Care sector;
- Swansea Carers - participation in upcoming event to raise profile with carers. This may lead to bespoke delivery;
- Maximus/Evolve/NHS - supporting client group with Essential Skills referrals and many others;
- Social Services - Digital Literacy support for Social Work team members. Support for staff with Additional Learning Needs/dyslexia/sensory impairments in accessing mandatory training (ongoing discussions);
- Gowerton Library volunteer - provide learning materials to assist delivery of learning opportunities;
- Ongoing accredited delivery in a wide range of subjects.

LLS has an increased Family Learning provision that is supporting Reception/Year 1 pupils and parents and more recently Year 6 pupils and parents – i.e. the transition into education and the transition to secondary education. We also continue to support pupils at Penybryn School with work-related skills. Further delivery to Penybryn will include some 3 Dimensional art/literacy learning.

Learning opportunities are widely advertised as follows:

- Swansea Council website;
- Lifelong Learning's Facebook page;
- Adult Learning Partnership Swansea (ALPS);
- Social Service Training Bulletin;
- Swansea Working Facebook and other marketing;
- Communities For Work Plus Newsletter;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email distribution lists to other departments and third sector organisations; • Participation in events e.g. community-based events, partner events, schools, Swansea Air Show, etc. <p>LLS continues to strive to support requests wherever possible.</p>
3	<p>Councillors Will Thomas, Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member please confirm when the Bracelet Bay CCTV cameras will be fitted as the date we were given has passed.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Well-being</p> <p>Cameras at Bracelet Bay will be installed as part of Phase 2 of the planned works and that phase will run from May through to July inclusive.</p>
4	<p>Councillors Mike White, Fiona Gordon, Lesley Walton & Wendy Lewis</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member confirm how many acquisitions the Council has secured in terms of buying back CRTB homes as well as any other acquisitions.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>Since 2018 the Council has secured 125 acquisitions via the More Homes Programme, including 52 completed in 22/23. All the properties have been let as social housing, and funded via the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Social Housing Grant or other WG grants. The HRA also acquired the former education centre known as Bryn House, which was converted into 4 flats with an additional 5 units of accommodation in the grounds, funded via WG Phase 2 homelessness funding, as well as 3 sites from the General Fund which will be developed for affordable housing.</p> <p>There is budget in the HRA Capital programme to continue acquisitions of houses and flats for 23/24, as well as further land acquisitions to increase the supply of affordable housing in Swansea.</p>
5	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>The basic council tax payers' service of refuse and recycling collections have become a bit erratic recently.</p> <p>Since the turn of the year, Uplands ward members have received an increasing number of emails from the council on the day of collection which we pass on to our constituents. They state that a significant section of the ward will not be collected until the following day.</p> <p>A. Is this the same for other wards across the city. B. What is the reason for this problem and what is the remedy. C. Can the cabinet member provide data on the number of missed collections for Jan-Mar 2022 compared with Jan-Mar 2023.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>A. All Ward Members across the Authority are advised if there is likely to be a significant disruption to waste collections in their Wards. Disruptions can be for a number of</p>

reasons, as outlined below, and which wards are affected depends on which days of the week there is disruption, and which rounds are affected. All Wards can be affected.

B.

Disruptions can be caused by vehicle breakdowns/delays in repairs, labour shortages due to unusually high level of absences and/or agency shortages, and extreme weather conditions. The Service Area continues to work with the Central Transport Unit to minimise vehicle issues, the current Traineeship of 29no. staff is due to end in May which will reduce absences due to the Traineeship, and we continue to put catch up plans in place when extreme weather is forecast.

C.

The number of reported missed domestic collections for January – March 2022 was 1423 which rose to 2225 for the same period in 2023. The Service Area is striving to minimise missed collections, and the permanent allocation of the 29 Trainees into the Waste Collection Team at the end of May should make a significant improvement. It should also be noted that even the increase level of missed collections in 2023 equates to 0.08% or 1 missed collection in every 1300 collections made.

6 Councillors Sam Bennett, Lynda James & James McGettrick

Given that Welsh Water Data have shown that the Tawe is the 6th most sewage polluted river in the UK, and Swansea Bay the 13th most sewage polluted beach. What conversations have been had with NRW and the Minister for Climate Change about cleaning our water ways for nature and bathers.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance

Water Quality and Water Management

We queried if there had been any major incidents locally with sewerage (sewage) getting into the sea after storms. We were informed by NRW there are storm overflows in Swansea around the coast and near rivers designed to spill excess water, which gets into the sewerage system during heavy rainfall, into the environment to stop homes getting flooded. We were pleased to hear that lots of work has been done over the last 10 years, and on our most valuable stretches of coast, overflows only spill in extreme conditions. We heard the next stage is to identify which problem overflows still exist and to prioritise with Welsh Water and OFSTAD which of these get investment for improvement.

We queried who is responsible for sewerage (sewage) discharge into the sea and were informed NRW is responsible for discharges into controlled waters i.e. rivers, most lakes and sea. We heard that NRW works with the Council on public health impacts of some of the discharges, but NRW has primary responsibility for responding to pollution incidents. We also heard Welsh Water have a responsibility to stay within permit limits and will be informed if there are any issues relating to their assets, NRW will follow up enforcement of this if needed. We noted there is a pollution hotline and details of this are on the NRW website. People should ring this number if they see any pollution incident affecting rivers or sea.

We queried how effectively agricultural pesticide runoff is monitored in Swansea and heard from NRW that the main problem due to agriculture throughout Wales is runoff with regard to slurry and nutrients. Agriculture is not the biggest issue in Swansea regarding water quality but it is monitored and if necessary followed up.

We queried if Caswell is one of the trouble sites with regards to discharge into the sea, how many trouble sites we have and how we compare to similar authorities. We heard from NRW that there are emergency overflows at both Caswell and Langland.

There have been some problems with flooding in the system particularly at Caswell which has led to overflow alerts being triggered in the past, however volumes discharged at both beaches are very small. We also heard that Caswell has been a concern because of the pumping station getting overwhelmed and the valley tends to get flooded in storm conditions, however, the Council, Welsh Water and management of Caswell Valley been working on this, and the situation has significantly improved, and risk is a lot lower. We were informed that Welsh Water will release results of water quality on 25 November 2022, but they expect Langland and Caswell to come out very well. We were pleased to hear this.

We wanted to know if infrastructure improvements are planned or needed in the area and were informed by NRW they would always be looking for infrastructure in Swansea to be investigated and improved if needs be. They will be asking for improvements on high spillers in Swansea area, which tend to be on the Tawe rather than Mumbles. We heard NRW and Welsh Water will be monitoring the situation in Langland. The pumping station there might need maintenance, but it is not a storm discharge.

We queried how we are going to future proof the sewerage/drainage system. We heard from NRW that we are likely to get more intense storms in future which will put pressure on any drainage system and that Welsh Water are taking this into account in their forward planning. We also heard Welsh Water has a 25-year plan (Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan) which can be accessed on their website and does address climate change. If it is delivered it will be a significant step forward. We asked NRW's views on septic tanks in urban areas and were informed they would rather not see them in urban areas and would rather properties be connected to main drains. We noted that NRW cannot stop people applying for a septic tank permit and they cannot control the planning process.

We queried the involvement NRW has with building sites regarding silt. We were informed that building sites should not result in silt pollution in rivers. We heard there is currently a problem in Penllergaer, that NRW is working with the house developer to try and manage the situation better and is monitoring the situation. NRW stated they need to work better in future with Planning and developers. They would like to see much better phasing of building sites and developers working in a cleaner way. We mentioned that Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) regulations are now in place and asked if this helped at all. NRW felt it is a significant step forward but there are limits to what any legislation can do. We heard that SUDS are more about drainage on the finished development and that NRW want to get better at preventing pollution from building activities.

With regards to bathing water quality at Swansea Bay, NRW collects detailed scientific data on the cleanliness of our bathing waters (mostly beaches) every year between May and September. Swansea Bay's water quality was designated as 'Good' for 2022. The information for Swansea Bay is available for bathing water quality data on the NRW website [Bathing water profile \(data.gov.uk\)](https://data.gov.uk)

Officers from Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing work closely with colleagues in NRW with regards to bathing water quality, Our coastal waters are hugely improved by large and sophisticated treatment schemes. We monitor water quality to protect public health using standards set in a European Directive transposed to the Bathing Water Regulations 2013.

The standards protect public health but recognise that seawater is a natural variable environment. Bad weather will result in higher numbers of bacteria.

	<p>Gower beaches easily pass the standards but Swansea Bay is a little more complex. In order to protect public health and avoid a detrimental effect on tourism, the Pollution Control team participated in a multi-agency, EU-funded project called 'Smart Coasts' which was a Wales/Ireland cross border programme.</p> <p>In 2011, intensive sampling of seawater from the Designated Sample Point (opposite the Guildhall Slip) on Swansea Bay and various inputs into the Bay and monitoring of other environmental parameters, such as solar radiation, was carried out. This data enabled the development of a prediction model for Swansea Bay in real time. The model predicts the mean bacterial concentration, which determines the water quality in health terms. This information can be passed to the public so an informed decision can be made about whether to swim. This approach protects public health and improves compliance with the standards.</p> <p>During the summer water quality information for Swansea Bay is displayed on signs by the Slip. Results are updated hourly between 8am and 8pm. The water quality can change throughout the day depending on sunlight, wind direction, river flows and the tide. The results are also broadcast via our Twitter account. To get up to date information simply follow @SwanseaBayWater. The 2022 season was the first time that the Robotic Process Automation System ran. The 'Robot' is trained to use the same rules a human would follow, if they were doing the process manually, which means the system can run without the need for manual intervention. This method of running a Bathing Water Prediction model is the first in Wales and could be rolled out to other areas in the future.</p>
7	<p>Councillors Will Thomas, Francesca O'Brien & Angela O'Connor</p> <p>Highways schemes using community budgets to improve road safety and additional disabled bays are much needed by our local residents in Mumbles. However, these schemes do not seem to make much progress. It might be that this department needs additional resources as the turnaround is frustrating for residents. Can the Cabinet Member please comment on resources and help us progress these schemes please.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>In recent weeks the Council have taken on additional resource to assist in dealing with a backlog of traffic and parking schemes across a number of Wards in Swansea. This has subsequently enabled us to issue the survey information to Mumbles members which will assist in deciding which schemes they wish to progress through to implementation.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
8	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>In the response to the Uplands group question at last Council, the Cabinet Member kindly outlined the formula for issuing builders parking waivers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What level of consultation was there with Ward Members in constructing the formula.

	<p>b. Did the formula need to be approved by Cabinet or was it implemented purely by officers under delegated powers.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>I can confirm that the formula for calculating the number of waivers is guidance only, this is used to prevent the street becoming oversubscribed due to issuing of parking waivers, this has not been amended since the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement. Recent changes introduced with respect to waivers involve making all waivers virtual via the Mipermit system, and the introduction of charges. These were accepted by Cabinet in January 2023. If the Members have any specific streets of concern Officers will be more than happy to assist.</p>
9	<p>Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member provide Council with an update on Swansea Airport.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>As was stated in a response to Councillor's questions on the 30th March it was intended that a report was to be submitted to Cabinet to consider further courses of action that were available. Further legal advice and investigations, including estimate of costs for all options, are required to ensure that any Cabinet decision is properly balanced and takes into account the interests of all Swansea residents.</p>
10	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>The top strip of concrete fascia on the Arena car park is looking a bit shoddy barely a year after completion. It is streaked with stain and algae, possibly from run off from the park above. Is it going to be left as it is or are their plans to clean and maintain it.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>Yes it will be cleaned periodically following winter weathering.</p> <p>A programme for cleaning concrete areas has not yet been activated but a sinking fund with regular planned maintenance is built into the financial model for the Copr Bay development.</p> <p>Whilst natural ageing and weathering is to be expected, especially in a coastal environment, cleaning of some areas may be required more regularly to keep this fantastic new asset looking pristine.</p>
11	<p>Councillors Peter May, Stuart Rice, Sandra Joy & Allan Jeffery</p> <p>On the Fabian Way in the St Thomas area, a living wall of ivy was installed in the central reservation. Two of the panels are hanging off leaning into the carriageway. It appears that they have become dislodged due to the weight of the ivy.</p> <p>A. Has the ivy been trimmed since installation to alleviate this obvious and inevitable occurrence.</p> <p>B. Is there a forward maintenance programme to make sure that it doesn't happen again.</p>

- C. Are the loose panels now in danger of falling into the road.
D. Are they going to be left as they are or are the council going to fix them.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

The Green Screen has not been trimmed since its installation in March 2020 in order to allow it to establish. Officers from the Pollution Control and Private Sector Housing Division will visit to establish the works required and arrange a forward maintenance programme to ensure repairs are carried out and future issues avoided.

12 Councillors Peter Black, Jeff Jones & Mark Tribe

Were external consultants employed as part of the council's levelling up fund bid and if so what was the total cost.

Response of the Leader

A total of £126,392 of costs were incurred in relation to the appointment of external consultant to assist in the development of the four levelling up bids that were submitted. These costs were financed through external grants from UK Government.

As a result of this £126k expenditure four Levelling Up Fund grant bids were submitted, securing £20m in capital grant funding for the Lower Swansea Valley project.

Whilst grant bids for the other three proposed projects were unsuccessful each proposal is now at a more advanced stage of design and technical development thanks to the necessary technical input from external consultants. This design and bid development work will be utilised for future bidding opportunities.

13 Councillors Lynda James, Mary Jones & Chris Holley

What benefits accrue to the council for being awarded as Council of the Year, and what officer time and resources were used to apply and prepare for it.

Response of the Leader

The Council's reputational standing locally, regionally, and nationally is crucial and being shortlisted for such prestigious awards is a measure of its success. Reputation is also important when dealing with investment opportunities and the likes of Urban Splash, Skyline and a range of local developers would not be considering Swansea and a destination unless this reputation had improved over recent years.

It is also important, that even in times of austerity, the council recognises the outstanding efforts carried out by its staff and there is no better way to do this than placing the Council and our employees on the national stage amongst the best in the UK

In terms of officer time the submission was prepared by the corporate comms and marketing team. However a record of time was not made as part of its preparation.

14	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Wendy Fitzgerald & Jeff Jones</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member tell Council how much has been spent on Active Travel schemes over the last four years. Also are they dedicated cycle paths or shared use paths.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>We are unable to provide full spend for the current financial year (2022-23) as the financial outturn has not been determined, but I have provided a summary below of the total spent on the preceding four years through the Welsh Government's Active Travel Fund.</p> <p>Active Travel Fund (ATF) grants are used for delivering and constructing new schemes, for designing and developing future schemes, for preparatory works or land purchase, and for supporting minor activities and improvements.</p> <p>The vast majority of schemes which have been delivered or improved are off-road 'shared use' walking and cycling routes. These are either entirely away from traffic, such as the route between Gowerton and Gorseinon or Clyne Valley, or widened footways which enable shared use, such as along Dyfatty Street or Clasemont Road. Some dedicated cycle infrastructure, separated from pedestrians and motor traffic, exists on Mayals Road, and similar facilities are being delivered on Gorseinon Road.</p> <p>Total ATF spend each financial year: 2018/19 - 2,042,866.73 2019/20 - 4,919,865.97 2020/21 - 4,318,832.36 2021/22 - 3,890,331.99 Total - £15,171,897.05</p>
15	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Peter Black & Susan Jones</p> <p>Can the Leader/Cabinet Member tell Council what the capital spending has been spent on our centre piece which is Swansea Market over the last four years.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>During the period 2019/20 to 2022/23, capital expenditure recorded against Swansea Market is £225,716. This includes investments made in the toilet/changing facilities and the market garden project. Further investment is also planned to improve the market entranceways in due course.</p>
16	<p>Councillors Chris Holley, Kevin Griffiths & Michael Locke</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member inform Council how many empty industrial/commercial units are currently available for lease or rent in our ownership or in the private sector.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism/ Corporate Service & Performance</p> <p>We do not hold the information relating to all empty properties in private ownership but can confirm that out of the 94 small industrial units that are managed by the Property Services Team, only 2 are currently vacant- a 97.8% occupancy.</p>