



**To:**  
**Councillor Hayley Gwilliam**  
**Cabinet Member for Community (Support),**

**Councillor Alyson Pugh**  
**Cabinet Member for Wellbeing,**

**Councillor Louise Gibbard**  
**Cabinet Member for Care Services**

*Please ask for:*  
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29 August 2023

## **BY EMAIL**

cc Cabinet Members

**Summary:** This is a letter from the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel to the relevant Cabinet Members following the meeting of the Panel on 7 August 2023. It covers Wales Audit Office Report, Tackling Poverty Grants and Direct Payments.

Dear Cllr Gwilliam, Cllr Pugh and Cllr Gibbard

The Panel met on 7 August 2023 to discuss the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Report 'Together We Can' – Community Resilience and Self-reliance and the Tackling Poverty Service Grants 2022/23 Impact Report. The Panel also discussed additional Direct Payments Information.

We would like to thank Cllr Gwilliam, Cllr Pugh, Amy Hawkins, Lee Cambule, Anthony Richards and Richard Davies for attending to present the items and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

## **WAO Report 'Together We Can' – Community Resilience and Self-reliance**

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU**

**SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE**

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We heard the Report is about moving away from 'doing to' to enabling and supporting communities to increase their self-reliance and that Swansea Council has already committed to doing this.

We asked how poverty is defined and measured, and queried how it is going to work in terms of identifying people to take on some of the work the Authority carried out in the past. We were informed it is difficult to measure things like this and the definition the Authority currently uses is from the 2017 Tackling Poverty Strategy - Income below the minimum income standard; inadequate access to necessary services of good quality; inadequate opportunity or resource to join in with social/cultural decision-making activities. We heard the Tackling Poverty Strategy is currently being refreshed to ensure you have the right definitions and measures in place and that a big part of this will be talking to communities about the role they have to play, with co-production being really important to this approach going forward. We also heard the evaluation being undertaken gives an opportunity to review where you are and the actions that need to take place to take this forward.

We queried why an audit committee based mainly on finance is trying to re-engineer the way communities operate, and if any social scientists or experts in network theory sit on it. We feel any committee proposing to be responsible for, or guide the development of, what effectively are different networks, would be wise to get an expert who understands network working and the training that comes with it. We were informed the role of the Governance and Audit Committee in this is to make sure, in terms of the recommendations put forward by the Auditor General, that the organisation is taking forward those recommendations and is following the right protocols to take them forward, and that the Committee is not assessing the detail of what the Authority is proposing. We heard the network element will be one of the approaches and that officers will take the feedback we have given on board going forward. We were pleased to hear this and added that forecasting is an important element of the anticipatory approach to building networks.

We asked how people who are empowered to take on these roles in the community will be controlled and how community self-reliance is going to be driven forward and were informed it is about tapping into rather than controlling it.

We queried when an audit is going to be done of what is already happening in each of the wards. We were informed the refreshed Strategy, done in collaboration, will give the priorities and themes to take forward. Cllr Pugh encouraged all Members to get to know their Local Area Coordinators, who have carried out mapping exercises of the wards in their areas.

We asked how a 'community' will be defined and how officers would go about working with the leaders of that community. We heard this is part of the definition work that needs to be done very carefully and in a co-ordinated way with communities. We feel that a community cannot be defined until you know what you want to do within that community.

We asked how long it is going to take and heard it is being tied in with the publication of the refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy and that the current timescale for this is to

go out to public consultation with a draft towards the end of this calendar year (October/November).

### **Tackling Poverty Service Grants 2022/23: Impact Report**

We heard that the Tackling Poverty Team handle a number of grants annually and that 2022-23 saw a significant increase in the number of grants and amount of grant funding (over £500,000) given to tackle poverty.

Officers urged Members to read the annual report to see the difference made in the words of the organisations themselves.

We asked about the female equivalent of 'Men's Sheds' and were pleased to hear that women can also use them and that there are now also 'Women's Sheds'.

### **Additional Direct Payments Information**

Additional information was provided in the form of case studies, which we found very useful.

We asked about the budget for direct payments in the current financial year, what proportion goes on paying personal assistants and what proportion on buying services. We were informed the spend currently is between £5.8 and £6 million a year for direct payments and the bulk of this goes towards personal assistants and specialised provision and that every payment comes with an assessment by a social worker.

We asked about the breakdown of monies that comes back to the Authority through its services as opposed to going outside the Authority. We heard that if someone is using direct payments it will all be for external services. If they use an internal service, this would be under a different assessed need, so people are only using that budget for direct payments to spend on other services. We also heard that in terms of splits of budget, the overall budget for Adult Services is over £100 million and direct payments is approximately £5.6 million of this.

We queried how the Authority monitors or stops direct payments being used for the wrong purpose. We were informed that any opportunity to use a direct payment, where it increases individual resilience, reduces reliance on services, or leads to either volunteering, education or employment, is a valid use of direct payments. We heard that in terms of monitoring, every spend is closely monitored, they either have managed accounts or pay cards, so there is oversight.

We asked if direct payments can be used if, for example, someone who uses a day service for two days wants to go for an extra day. We heard it would depend on their assessed need.

### **Your Response**

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised, however in this instance, a formal written response is not required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Jones." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a small 'J'.

**SUSAN JONES**  
**CONVENER, ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL**  
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