



Council – 7 December 2023

Councillors' Questions

Part A – Supplementaries

1	<p>Councillors Lyndon Jones, Paxton Hood-Williams, Will Thomas, Richard Lewis, Angela O'Connor, Francesca O'Brien and Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>What discussions did the Cabinet Member have with ward Councillors prior to the recent bus cuts.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>All of the cutbacks have been made by First Cymru to their commercially operated network of services as a result of a reduction in funding for bus services by the Welsh Government through its Bus Transition Fund. The Council had little power to influence the outcomes because of the commercial nature of the services. However, officers worked with the company to try to ensure that all communities continued to have a basic level of service.</p> <p>In the light of the funding reduction, the timescale for First Cymru making the cutbacks was very tight. However, a comprehensive list of the service changes was sent to all Local Members just over a week before their introduction date.</p>
2	<p>Councillors Wendy Fitzgerald, Mary Jones and Kevin Griffiths</p> <p>Although tree planting has taken place across Swansea, it seems we are a long way from achieving any net gains. Would the Cabinet Member agree that without enormous investment in tree planting and aftercare, there's little chance of ever matching the numbers removed.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services & Performance and Community (Services)</p> <p>Swansea council has a tree management strategy, the overarching aim of which is to maximise the myriad of benefits that trees provide. This is a comprehensive and well researched document.</p> <p>Any tree planting to align with this strategy.</p> <p>Planting ad-hoc i.e. outside of the strategy; usually results in sub-optimal location selection, lower survival rates and longevity issues; all of which have an adverse financial impact as well as the loss of benefits that the tree(s) would have brought.</p> <p>As part of this strategy, a tree canopy survey has been completed; from which, areas suitable for further planting have been identified and are being prioritised based on established success criteria.</p>

	<p>The aim of the current tree strategy (which is aligned to current resource constraints) is to plant 300 standards per year.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Councillors Mike Day, Cheryl Philpott and Lynda James</p> <p>Residents have told us that they have recently noticed that buses from other cities have appeared on the streets of Swansea. It's been suggested that they have been moved here because those cities have introduced stricter emission controls on buses. Will the Cabinet Member tell Council</p> <p>(a) Whether the Council is aware of this;</p> <p>(b) What measures Swansea Council can apply to limit bus emissions for both school transport and for service buses;</p> <p>(c) Whether the Council is aware and/or informed of what bus operators vehicles actually emit, or who is responsible for monitoring such emissions;</p> <p>(d) What communication has taken place with public transport providers locally to ascertain their plans to introduce lower emission vehicles in Swansea, including fully electric buses. And, if so, when can Swansea residents expect to be served by all electric vehicles.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>(a) Officers are aware of three buses that were transferred from Somerset to the First Cymru fleet earlier this year, but this was not in relation to stricter emission controls in Somerset. They replaced older vehicles in the First Cymru fleet.</p> <p>(b) The Council already states the maximum age of vehicles in its Conditions of Contract for Home to School Transport and Local Bus contracts – 15 years for coaches and 12 years for minibuses and buses. Neighbouring Authorities allow older vehicles on their Home to School Transport contracts.</p> <p>The ages of the vehicles determine their emission levels.</p> <p>If the Council was to lower the maximum age of vehicles allowed on its contracts, rates would undoubtedly increase, and unfortunately a fine line has to sometimes be drawn between what is desirable and what is affordable.</p> <p>(c) Bus operators are licenced by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner, which is part of the Department for Transport, rather than by the Council. Their vehicles are subject to annual MoT checks and these include testing emission levels. Bus operators are obliged to report their MoT results to the Traffic Commissioner's Office but they are not routinely shared with Councils. However, the Traffic Commissioner will call a bus operator to a Public Inquiry if the first time MoT pass rate is considered low. The Council can then request further information and attend the Public Inquiry. The Council occasionally receives reports from members of the public and schools about buses and coaches that are omitting black smoke, and these are then passed to the bus operators so that the issues can be rectified. Officers can also follow these up with the DVSA (Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency) if considered necessary.</p> <p>(d) In view of the uncertainties that bus operators are facing as a result of the Welsh Government's intention to franchise bus services from 2025/2026 onwards, there has been little investment in bus fleets in recent years. The exception is First Cymru, who received 10 new diesel-powered buses last Spring.</p>

	<p>The only fully electric bus in Swansea is a minibus owned by Community Transport operator DANSA, though this was grant funded.</p> <p>Transport for Wales is looking at the feasibility of procuring a hydrogen powered fleet of buses for operation in the Swansea Bay Region in the next few years.</p>
4	<p>Councillors Wendy Lewis, Mike White, Lesley Walton and Mike Lewis</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation give an update on the current position of the Oracle Fusion Programme.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>The system successfully went live in April 2023 with payroll and pensions running accurately. There were some critical post go-live issues, primarily relating to interfaces with other Council systems. These are now mostly fixed, except for the integration with pensions. Development has now been completed and the integration is being tested by the payroll and pensions teams. Once this is uploaded to the live environment, the Council will exit the post go-live support arrangements and begin the transition to the new Oracle Operating Model, as agreed by Cabinet on the 19th October.</p>
5	<p>Councillor Lesley Walton, Mike Lewis Wendy Lewis and Mike White</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation tell Council how many acquisitions have been made to increase council housing supply and how many of those were ex council right to buy.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>Since April 2019, the Council has acquired a total of 145 properties. Of these 135 were ex council RTB.</p> <p>The 10 non ex RTB properties includes the following;-</p> <p>Acacia Road– former respite centre - bought from Social Services and converted to 2 houses. Alexandra Road – former supported living centre – bought from Social Services and converted to 2 houses.</p> <p>In addition we have purchased 6 properties that were NOT Ex-Council properties and are a combination acquisitions bought with ICF funding (Bungalows) and properties that were offered to us because of a legal charge against the property e.g. The Pemcrete scheme; where the charge may have included the LA having first refusal or and/or included a retained % value in the property.</p>
6	<p>Councillors Lyndon Jones, Paxton Hood-Williams, Will Thomas, Richard Lewis, Angela O'Connor, Francesca O'Brien and Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>What discussions have been held with the Welsh Government regarding the practical implementation of a bus franchising model.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p>

	<p>As a key stakeholder, in Summer 2022, the Council provided its views on franchising bus services following the Welsh Government’s consultation for its White Paper.</p> <p>Since then, the Council, like all others, has been kept apprised of the Welsh Government’s intentions and indicative timescales by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO).</p> <p>It is understood that the first franchises will be let in 2025/2026 and that Wales will be split into 10 regions, though not necessarily County Council aligned. An indicative date for the Swansea Bay Region has yet to be announced.</p>
7	<p>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Stuart Rice and Sandra Joy</p> <p>In a written answer to a question at October’s council, the Leader stated that: “Prior to the adoption of the Policy Commitments in July 2022, Swansea Council had installed 80 public facing EV charge points across 25 locations.” At the time of writing, the council website states the same figure.</p> <p>a. Have any public facing EV charge points been installed since the adoption of the Policy Commitments in July 2022</p> <p>In the Policy Commitments tracker that accompanied the report in October, the RAG analysis of the commitment “Swansea Council will support and enable the increase and availability of electric vehicle (EV) charging points and develop a wider EV charging strategy” came up as Green – “On Track”</p> <p>b. How can this be the case if there is a scenario where none have been installed since July 2022.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation</p> <p>The equipment is consistent with Swansea Council’s EV charging network and will be added to the total number of public chargers for residents and visitors to utilise on Swansea Council’s network, which will stand at 95 charge points across 26 locations.</p> <p>No Welsh Government Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Transformation Funding was available for local authorities to apply for in 2022/23, as a result there were limited opportunities to expand provision during this period.</p> <p>The Council has successfully bid for ULEVTF funding in 23/24 and a further roll out of 30 destination charge points at 14 locations is being undertaken this year. In addition, we are working with Transport for Wales on an on street residential pilot scheme. This is in its infancy, we are seeking residents’ views via online survey to help inform which areas currently have the greatest need.</p>
8	<p>Councillors Lyndon Jones, Paxton Hood-Williams, Will Thomas, Richard Lewis, Angela O'Connor, Francesca O'Brien and Brigitte Rowlands</p> <p>An extra £35 million has been given by UK Government to the Senedd for flooding. What communications have been made to the Senedd to seek extra funding for flood prevention in Swansea.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>The council has a number of schemes currently with Welsh Government. To access the funding through the Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management</p>

(FCERM) Capital Grant programme each scheme has to go through a number of stages, each step of each stage can take a year or more.

The stages of application are as follows:

Stage 1 Feasibility study- Business Justification case(BJC)/Outline Business Case (OBC), Stage 2 full Business Case(FBC)/Detailed design, and Stage 3 Construction.

Our current schemes include.

Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Grant Funding 2023-24

West Street Gorseinon Stage 1 BJC completed under review

Killay Square Killay Stage 1 BJC completed under review.

Brockhole Stream Blackpill – Stage 2 FBC/Detailed design ongoing

400 Birchgrove Road OBC ongoing . Further work required on wider catchment approach by NRW.

Beryl Road Clydach – Stage 1 BJC ongoing.

Capel Road – Stage 2 FBC/Detailed Design grant awarded.

Sway Road – Stage 1 OBC completed being reviewed.

Kingrosia Pk Clydach Stage 1 completed under review.

Western Street Sandfields Stage 1 BJC ongoing

Coastal Risk Management Programme (CRMP)

Mumbles Coastal Defence Scheme – Stage 3 ongoing

We are also working on a preliminary proposal in relation to city centre flood risk.

9 Councillors Mike White, Lesley Walton, Mike Lewis and Wendy Lewis

How will the new mumbles sea defences enhance the biodiversity and attractiveness of the waterfront for the local community and visitors.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

The overall scheme will provide a green corridor with an improved habitat which will support native species as well as providing enhanced visual amenity spaces for passive recreation and socialising, creating a valuable space for the local community as well as visitors to meet, relax and play. The face of the sea wall will include textured hexagonal concrete formwork to encourage the growth of algae and colonisation by marine invertebrates. The design was developed in conjunction with the SeaHive project led by Swansea University. Trials conducted prior to the construction of the coastal protection scheme evidenced the best material and wall profile to restore and improve future biodiversity within the local marine environment. The proposal makes provision for extensive soft landscaping along the promenade and the design of the seawall will encourage the growth of algae and colonisation by marine invertebrates such as periwinkles to provide further ecological enhancement. The outputs of the SeaHive research programme have been presented to international working groups and will result in infrastructure enhancements globally.

The scheme will provide not only provide a flood defence betterment to local residents and businesses but will also bring wider benefits for regeneration and tourism. The scheme seeks to plant 46 new trees along the length of the promenade as well as additional planting and landscaping of the area. The species have been chosen due to their resilience to the harsh conditions found on the seafront. Several

of the species chosen will also provide nectar sources for bees to support and improve the local biodiversity. The existing ecosystems will be maintained and enhanced with those currently in decline being restored, supporting the achievement of sustainable development, for the benefit of present and future generations.

The public realm has been designed to improve the quality of user experience, whilst safeguarding the character of the area. The scheme will include new seating, lighting and play opportunities, whilst biodiverse planting will be incorporated to align with the authorities ambitions to introduce sustainable green infrastructure. These will also provide Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs solutions) to repurpose surface water runoff in a sustainable manner. Additional greening will be introduced adjacent to the promenade near Southend gardens that will support improved links to the existing play attraction, but also incorporate new features to encourage active play for visitors and the local community. This area will also continue to support pop-up food and beverage opportunities, whilst also providing enhanced links to support existing businesses along Mumbles Road with new crossing points.

Works include widening the existing promenade to reduce cyclist and pedestrian conflict by increasing the width to a minimum of 6 metres to provide space for both pedestrians and cyclists. This will improve connectivity, accessibility, and promote sustainable active travel opportunities. The promenade south of Oyster Wharf will become more accessible with regular pedestrian access points to connect the promenade with the existing businesses and uses along Mumbles Road. Several bike hubs will be located at regular intervals along the promenade. These will include cycle stands and bike maintenance points, with existing shelters located at Oyster Wharf and Verdi's to be retained. Existing access to the beach will be maintained and improved to provide betterment for users. Improved lighting will also be provided along the prom. This will take the form of new additional low level lighting bollards as well, festoon lighting and the replacement of the existing lighting columns along the prom. This is will provide a safe and more inclusive environment, whilst also supporting the night time economy of the area.

10 **Councillors Mike White, Lesley Walton, Mike Lewis and Wendy Lewis**

How has the Rural Anchor programme supported innovative and well-being enhancing projects in Swansea's rural areas.

Response of the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

Seven projects have been allocated funding related to the wellbeing theme under the first open call under the Rural Anchor. The project team is in the process of holding inception meetings with successful applicants at present, so as yet no formal funding announcements have been made and no press has been released. Details of successful schemes will be publicised soon.

Overall funding allocated to direct wellbeing schemes in first call 'window': £59,166
Overall funding allocated to community renewable energy schemes in first call window: £105,152

Feasibility study related to this theme in first call window: £10,626

The second funding window has just closed and assessment of applications is underway. There is no guarantee that all schemes will be funded, but as an indicator

	<p>a further £61,000 has been received against volunteering schemes which will have a direct wellbeing impact if approved, £55,757 against renewable energy schemes, £29,995 against biodiversity projects (which often have wellbeing built into them), and £45,467 against supporting local markets which would support the local economy.</p>
	<p>Part B – No Supplementaries</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Councillors Kevin Griffiths, Susan Jones and Sam Bennett</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member tell Council if the funding that was available for skateboard parks has all been used up and if not how much is available for Communities to get a share.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>Swansea Council is working with award-winning designers and consultants, Curve Studio, to create a new generation of skate and wheeled sport facilities. The £1m initiative will provide new and improved provision across the city. By investing in a new generation of top-class facilities, the Council is supporting the growth of Swansea’s thriving skate and wheeled sports scene, enhancing the city as a whole. Well-designed facilities offer free for all, engaging places to get active and socialise, and these outdoor spaces help support well-being and make a positive contribution in ensuring active lifestyles for local communities.</p> <p>The project has two key stages. Phase One is to create a masterplan for all skate and wheeled sports across Swansea. Phase Two will involve the shaping and refinement of the individual projects before tendering for works.</p> <p>No decisions have been made regarding the locations, type or level of investment per site or new facility, and it is critical that the appropriate time is spent on the review and consultation phase. We have put aside a sum of money for this critical stage, which represents less than 5% of the total project budget. The remaining budget is protected for capital works to identified sites within the masterplan.</p> <p>Having evaluated facilities and sites across the city, Curve Studio and the Council will soon be asking the community for their views on the current provision, and what they’d like to see in future developments. This will initially involve launching a webpage for the project, with a link to an online survey which will provide an opportunity for the community and key stakeholders to submit their views. These will inform the draft masterplan and budget allocation, with clear site information.</p> <p>A further round of consultation will give everyone an opportunity to give their views on the different options, these are scheduled to be held using a blend of face to face and remote sessions; organised in geographical clusters and key locations in Swansea, e.g. leisure and community centres- inviting all those that wish to have their say or find out more.</p>

	<p>Curve Studio will use this final piece of feedback to select and finesse a masterplan, ready for Cabinet to consider the potential investments prior to planning for and tendering for any works in 2024.</p>
12	<p>Councillors Mike Day, Wendy Fitzgerald and James McGettrick</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member state how long an electrical street sweeper can operate before needing to be recharged? Can he further state where the sweepers are garaged overnight and where charging points are available for them during the day, and how long it normally takes to recharge them before they can be operational again. If there has been any review undertaken of the performance and efficiency of such vehicles, can he release the report(s) to all Councillors.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Community (Services)</p> <p>The operational sweeping time of an Electric Mechanical Brush Vehicle (eMBV) with a full charge is 7-8 hours.</p> <p>The eMBVs are stored at Pipehouse Wharf Depot in a designated parking/charging bay.</p> <p>The eMBV takes up to 4 hours to fully charge from a flat battery.</p> <p>The 2no. electric MBVs Cleansing use were provided as part of a grant and complement the existing fleet therefore whilst no formal review has occurred the service is monitoring their performance with a view to the next round of MBV replacements due in a couple of years' time, although it is expected technology will have advanced by then.</p>
13	<p>Councillors Mike Day, Chris Holley and Susan Jones</p> <p>We all welcome the investment in play areas across the City and County and are sure they are being enjoyed by children in the areas they are located. Following recent cases of vandalism to play equipment, could the Cabinet Member tell Council whether there is any insurance cover provided for the expensive play equipment installed? If not, how is the repair/replacement of any damaged equipment to be covered? What budget does the Council have available for the repair/replacement and future maintenance of play equipment across the Council.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism</p> <p>I would agree that the investment of around £7.5M has been a great boost to the play facilities for the benefit of the children who use them.</p> <p>Unfortunately there is no insurance cover available for the equipment in our parks as insurers deem it too high a risk, so funding would be required to repair or replace any items damaged.</p> <p>The Council currently has a £120K annual budget to cover all inspections, and minor maintenance & repairs, a £400K one off fund to cover major repairs and replacements where considered viable, and the Council is able to assist in the arranging of major repairs and replacements of equipment instigated and funded by others, such as Ward Members and Town/Community Councils.”</p>

14	<p>Councillors Michael Locke, Peter Black and Mark Tribe</p> <p>Arts Council Wales have recently announced their funding allocations for 2024/2025. Out of the total of £30M Swansea is allocated £556,289, Newport £1,181,000 and Cardiff £16,258,381. The Taliesin Centre Swansea has had its funding cut entirely. This is grossly disproportionate and inequitable as far as Swansea is concerned. Will the Cabinet Member be protesting about this settlement to ACW.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism and Culture, Human Rights & Equalities</p> <p>The allocation of funding from the Arts Council Wales to arts organisations was the result of their Investment Review. This Review was part of their commitment to diversify their portfolio and to have a stronger relationship with arts organisations who had not previously been funded, but who were delivering on widely acknowledged priorities for inclusion, diversity, environmental and economic sustainability amongst others. This was not a ‘settlement’ to the Authority in that respect, as it was a process to which all arts organisations in Wales were invited to bid into. This included those galleries, Art Centres, Theatres, Dance Companies etc. who were already in receipt of funding; having been part of what was previously termed a ‘portfolio’ of regularly / revenue funded organisations, usually on a renewable three-year term. The process was extremely involved, requiring rigorous and evidenced presentations and applications, including a submission by the Council’s own Glynn Vivian Gallery. The application criteria entailed describing a five-year programme, and the ways in which this would address the published ACW six principles of Climate Justice, Welsh Language, Creativity, Widening Engagement, Nurturing Talent and Transformation. Applicants were also invited to outline any areas needing more support, for example staffing, programme and learning resource to fulfil their potential.</p> <p>We can see from the outcomes, that the majority of previously funded organisations who retained funding (including the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, which has been a portfolio organisation for 20 years) secured ‘standstill’ amounts, whilst others, including the Taliesin and National Theatre Wales, were unsuccessful, arguably allowing the portfolio to be diversified but causing difficulty for many in the process. In acknowledgement of this, ACW instigated an Appeals process, open to all within 21 calendar days of the decision, the assumption being this was for those who had received a cut or total removal. It is not the Council’s intention to intervene in this process as it is subject to the individual organisations’ ability to demonstrate unfairness, or lack of understanding of their ability to meet the ACW’s priorities. Nor can the Council request more funding for organisations that have elected not to put themselves through the process, but we remain committed to working in partnership to obtain grants, programming support and collaborative partnerships with all creative and cultural organisations in the city and county, including the Taliesin.</p>
15	<p>Councillors Michael Locke, Peter Black and Mary Jones</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member please give an update on the extension to Swansea Museum. This is part of "Levelling up" to enable artifacts in store to be on display at the Museum.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism and Culture, Human Rights & Equalities</p>

	<p>The extension and improvements to Swansea Museum is an exciting addition to the Lower Swansea Valley Levelling Up programme. The Council’s Cultural Services managers are working with colleagues in Regeneration to define the full scope of the opportunity for the Museum to improve its exhibition, conservation, specialist store and learning facilities, with an enhanced visitor experience with improved access, and connectivity to the surrounding areas. The Museum Service’s collection contains thousands of artefacts and the intention is to diversify the programme of exhibitions and learning opportunity by making these as accessible as possible, acknowledging that there will continue to be limitations on space and exhibition turnover. This work is still in the early design stages, but progress is extremely promising concerning the design team’s understanding of the brief, and our ability to create additional space and access to visitor services, whilst remaining sympathetic to and within the parameters of, criteria concerning the heritage and listed status of Swansea Museum.</p>
16	<p>Councillors Peter May, Allan Jeffrey, Stuart Rice & Sandra Joy</p> <p>In response to a council question in November, the Cabinet Member confirmed that parking fees would not be waived for people using charging points in council carparks.</p> <p>a. Are there any council installed EV points outside council car parks and if so how many. Waiving the parking fee is done by some other councils to incentivise the use of public facing EV charging</p> <p>b. Would the Cabinet Member consider waiving the parking fee for those who solely wish to access a public facing EV charging point which happens to be in a car park.</p> <p>Response of the Cabinet Members for Service Transformation and Environment & Infrastructure</p> <p>There are currently 10 charge points installed in Council car parks which do not charge for parking. In addition, a further 25 are to be installed at destinations (leisure centres, etc), and on street where no parking charges apply.</p> <p>We are aware some Council’s waive parking charges for EV charging, there are a number of issues which would need to be explored both practical and financial in the consideration of waiving fees for drivers to access a public charge point and confirm that these will be fully considered as part of the 24/25 budget setting process and at the next review of parking tariffs.</p>