



**To/
Councillor Rob Stewart
Cabinet Member for Economy and
Strategy**

BY EMAIL

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*Our Ref
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Overview & Scrutiny

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14th November 2017

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy following the meeting of the Panel on 1st November 2017.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

On 1st November 2017, the Service Improvement and Finance Performance Panel met to consider the Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring Report, the Mid-Year Budget Statement and the Reserve Update.

We are grateful to all Officers for providing information and answering questions.

We have made a number of observations that we wish to share with you and have some questions we would be grateful to receive responses to.

Recycling and Landfill – Annual Performance Monitoring

We were pleased to hear of the improvement in the service over the last year and were interested to have an explanation around the Local Government Performance Bulletin positions.

We felt that some of the issues discussed, such as building an incinerator in South West Wales, has been being raised at various stages over the last 10 years. We would like to see things moved forward in this area.

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We were interested to hear about progress with the recycling of items such as nappies, continence waste and soft plastics. It was felt these are important issues to focus on to ensure problematic items are recycled to the best of our ability.

It was mentioned that challenging areas such as students creating substantial black bag waste and the inability to recycle soft plastics stems from a failure to address the root cause of the issues. Landlords should make more provision and insist on recycling and manufacturers should not use packaging which is not easily recycled or biodegradable. More research and awareness raising should be taken in relation to these issues.

Mid-Year Budget Statement

Councillors had received a verbal overview at Council the previous week. However, it was queried why there needs to be Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring Report and a Mid-Year Budget Statement or whether the timing of the report to the Service Improvement and Finance Panel should be before reporting to Council or whether it needs to come to the Panel at all.

We would be interested in your thoughts.

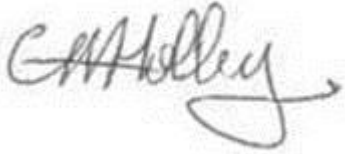
Reserves Update

The Panel had some questions in relation to the report;

1. Point 2.2 states that there are £285m in unusable reserves. Can you please provide the Panel with a breakdown of what these reserve amounts are and what they are intended for?
2. Point 2.5 states that comparisons with other Welsh Councils show that Swansea's General Fund reserve is slightly below the All Wales average. Can you explain why this is?
3. Point 3.2 looks at planned savings in Social Services. Can you explain why planned savings are being mentioned when as a Council we have had to put extra money into the service? This seems contradictory.
4. Point 3.10. The 2017/18 Budget Report to Council in February stated there was an underlying planning assumption that £2m of the existing restructuring reserve be provisionally committed towards meeting part of the cost of staffing reductions as they fall due in 2017/18. How do you decide the underlying planning assumption figure of £2m?

I would be grateful if you could reply to this letter by 5th December 2017.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'CH Holley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Chris Holley
Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance
Panel

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