

Councillor Mary Jones
Chair – Scrutiny Programme
Committee

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Rob Stewart
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Our Ref: RS/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 21st February 2018

Dear Councillor

CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION – 8 JANUARY

Thank you for your letter dated 31st January 2018 in which you raised a number of questions and queries on behalf of members of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. I have addressed the issues you raised in this letter.

Budget

Indeed I remain utterly concerned at the Westminster Government's continued insistence on austerity for austerity sake, starving public services of the funding they need to meet demands, service expectations and pay and price pressures completely outside of this Council's control.

The position has unfortunately been compounded as a result of, albeit, entirely justifiable, in my view, proposed pay increases for local government and teaching staff who have borne an unfair brunt of that austerity to date, for which not one penny of funding has been provided by government.

Unfortunately that austerity has also forced Welsh Government to make choices and cut a number of specific grants in education and to a lesser extent waste. Furthermore due to a less than transparent process that has resulted in wholly regrettable, and I'm afraid entirely foreseeable, consequences for service users if we simply continued to perpetuate the specific grant "pass the parcel" and "cut the service" process .

You will see in the proposals Cabinet makes to Council on the final budget recommendations that notwithstanding these clear choices made by others, I remain entirely determined to prioritise education provision , schools in particular, along with social services and equally will not stand by but will intervene with resolute action and resources, we can frankly barely afford to muster, to protect the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups we provide services to, until a full and open consultation and impact assessment of the consequences of others actions are at least completed and where possible and affordable we mitigate those risks and make alternative provision .

Swansea Central

Regarding your query concerning the Arena and its business plan. I am pleased to report that ATG (Ambassador Theatre Group) which operates over 50 venues worldwide from Piccadilly London to Broadway New York, has now signed a 30 year lease and secured its long-term commitment to Swansea. ATG has produced a business plan which will accommodate major theatrical productions, concerts, international conferences and exhibitions that will firmly put Swansea on the national live entertainment circuit and act as a catalyst for future investment of retail, leisure and residential development in the city centre. This announcement will also help reinforce the existing interest generated for a hotel adjacent to the Arena venue and we are now even more confident it will help secure an operator. We cannot underestimate the importance of the City Deal and ATG as a major anchor tenant to Swansea and the confidence and interest it will generate and I am pleased to report that Initial Construction interest for the project has been excellent."

Corporate Priorities

The Act does not require public bodies to have a specific objective for each aspect of well-being but it does require us to show how we are contributing to each aspect, including environmental well-being, through the steps that we are taking to meet our well-being objectives, which is the approach we have taken in the Corporate Plan.

The PSB will be working over the next 18 months to identify specific steps to implement the Boards well-being objectives and to review its governance arrangements in order to help support delivery.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by a horizontal line and a final upward stroke.

COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART
LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY & STRATEGY