



**To/
Councillor Robert Francis-Davies
Cabinet Member for Culture,
Tourism & Major Projects**

BY EMAIL

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Major Projects following the meeting of the Committee on 12 March 2018. It is about Dylan Thomas, Skyline Project & Penderyn Distillery, City of Culture, City Centre Management, Universities, Greener Cities, and Sports Facilities.

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 12 March

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 12 March 2018 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Major Projects.

We appreciate you providing a written paper, giving headlines from your portfolio, in support of your appearance. The Q & A session gave us an opportunity to explore priorities and achievements in relation to your wide-ranging areas of responsibility. You talked about ambition and aspirations however made it very clear that current financial pressures were a significant impediment to Council spending on improvements in relation to portfolio responsibilities.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the Committee, and, where necessary, raise any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

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Dylan Thomas

We discussed the importance of Dylan Thomas to Swansea's cultural and tourism offering, and development of a Dylan Thomas Trail. Committee Members were pleased to see recent visual enhancements around parts of the city, with the painting of murals on utility boxes and public benches.

We welcomed the news that the Dylan Thomas Exhibition at the Dylan Thomas Centre had recently been named as the Best Family Arts Venue in the UK. Given the excellence of the Exhibition and importance of Dylan Thomas we asked whether the exhibition could be expanded at the Centre or indeed elsewhere in the City, to build on the interest.

We also asked whether more could be made of the wider circle of cultural icons known as the Kardomah Gang, including Alfred Janes, Vernon Watkins, and John Prichard. We noted that blue plaques are being installed to honour Swansea's important and significant citizens. There was also mention within the Committee of the need to honour John Dillwyn Llewelyn, botanist and pioneer photographer.

Skyline Project & Penderyn Distillery

We noted your report on heritage, including the river corridor development. We asked in particular about the work at the Hafod Copperworks to accommodate the Council's private sector investor Penderyn, and financial implications. We also asked about financial implications for the Council in relation to the Skyline project at Kilvey Hill. We understand this project will feature a luge down Kilvey Hill and will be accessed by way of a cable car from part of the Hafod site.

You have told us that the next steps will include agreeing Heads of Terms with Penderyn and to undertake a masterplan of the wider Hafod site in order to accommodate Skyline's requirements and to identify future development opportunities. You stated that the company behind the Skyline project would fully fund the development, with a circa £50m investment in the City beating off competition from a number of other cities which they looked at. You spoke about the potential for this to become the best tourist attraction in Wales. You also confirmed that the Council is not providing funding directly to Penderyn, however is able to access grants that will enable restoration of the heritage site and buildings, with visitor facilities.

City of Culture

We asked about progress in delivering a cultural programme, and support from the Welsh Government, despite missing out on the award of the UK City of Culture for 2021. You talked about the benefits of the bid, not least in bringing people together and raising the profile of Swansea. You justified the

cost of the bid (noted as being less than the rival cities) against the huge financial benefits that would have resulted from success.

We heard from you about the importance of a good cultural programme to build upon the hard work, and its connection with regeneration of the City. You said that initial talks with Welsh Government official have been encouraging.

You were convinced that being chosen to host the Radio One Biggest Weekend Music Festival was down to the raised profile of Swansea from being a shortlisted City of Culture, and close working with the BBC. You were committed to bringing other big events to Swansea, and stressed the need to be ambitious and promote our city.

Committee Members mentioned the Welsh National Opera (WNO) and expressed concern about the lack of appearances in the Grand Theatre or other Swansea venues despite being in receipt of 40% funding from Wales Arts Council. You agreed that Swansea deserved to see the WNO in the City and we suggested you lobby the organisation and put pressure on WNO to include Swansea in future tours.

City Centre Management

Concern was expressed about the state of cleanliness in the City Centre particularly around Castle Square and the impression / effect it gives investors and visitors to Swansea. We understood that the Square was subject of future re-development but felt it was in urgent need of attention. You explained that cleansing would be under the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Environment Services, however agreed that attention was needed. You stressed the difficulties caused by budget cuts and inevitable consequence of poorer standards of cleanliness, something which you felt was affecting other cities too.

Universities

We asked you to provide an update on proposals for an International Sports Village in partnership with Swansea University on the King George V Playing Fields.

You reported that a strategic working group has been established, including the Universities, to maintain communications around key projects in the City. You highlighted that work was going to discuss the alignment of priorities, which will determine which projects can move forward. You anticipated that future activity will include the Council, both Universities and its partners agreeing a vision and strategy for the future of an International Sports Village incorporating Wales National Pool Swansea.

Greener Cities

We asked about what this responsibility meant in practice and how it fitted with other Cabinet Members who have green responsibilities. You gave some example of activities supporting this portfolio responsibility. You also referred to the importance of the Local Development Plan Open Space Assessment.

Sports Facilities

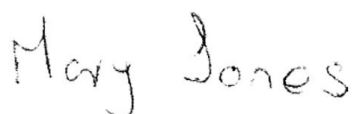
We asked about progress in the delivery of 3G Pitches to benefit the local sporting community and enhance the current facility infrastructure. We heard that the first phase had been completed at Penyrheol and Morriston. The second phase would focus on three sites namely Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive School / Community Leisure Centre, Pentrehafod Comprehensive School / Community Sports Centre and YGG Bryntawe / Penlan Community Leisure Centre. We noted that further 3G pitches would be dependent on the agreement with Swansea City AFC.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter useful and would welcome any further comments however we do not expect you to provide a formal response.

We will arrange to follow up on portfolio developments and invite you to a future committee meeting in due course.

Yours sincerely,



COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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