



**To/
Councillors June Burtonshaw &
Mary Sherwood
Cabinet Members for Future
Generations**

BY EMAIL

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SPC/2017-18/17

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Members for Future Generations following the meeting of the Committee on 9 April 2018. It is about the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Biodiversity, Community Hubs, and Members Community Budget Scheme.

Dear Councillor,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 9 April

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 9 April 2018 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Members for Future Generations.

We appreciate you providing a written paper, giving headlines from this new cabinet portfolio, in support of your appearance. The Q & A session gave us an opportunity to explore priorities and achievements in relation to your areas of responsibility.

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

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Portfolio Responsibilities

We are aware that the portfolio is shared however you confirmed that most of the responsibilities have been divided so that there is a clear lead for specific work:

<u>Cllr Burtonshaw:</u>	<u>Cllr Sherwood:</u>	<u>Shared:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Building & Asset Transfer opportunities• Suburban Centres & Community Regeneration Initiatives• Members Community Budget Scheme• Member Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Future Generations Act Compliance• Equalities (Access to Services)• Digital Inclusion• Sustainable Development• Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity• Engagement• Poverty Reduction• Lead Elements of Sustainable Swansea

We noted that the Cabinet vote rotates every three months. During the months when one does not hold the vote, the other is regarded as a non-Executive Member in constituted meetings but maintains responsibility for work on their portfolio areas.

You clarified that there have been changes to the Future Generations portfolio responsibilities however we remarked that these have not been reported to Council.

The following changes were noted:

- Future Generations Bill Adoption – now described as Future Generations Act Compliance.
- Risk & Resilience – corporate risk and resilience is part of Service Transformation & Business Operations (Deputy Leader) cabinet portfolio, although you would report on risks arising relevant to the Future Generations Act, which impacts across the whole Council.
- Strategic Estates & Property incl. Asset Rationalisation – part of Service Transformation & Business Operations (Deputy Leader) cabinet portfolio
- Member Champions – addition to the portfolio. Councillor Champions, appointed by the Leader of the Council, provide a voice for traditionally underrepresented groups, or issues which should be kept at the forefront of Council business.

You confirmed that the Leader would be reporting these changes to Council in due course.

Future Generations Act Compliance

You reported that the Council has made good progress implementing the Act. We noted that the Council published its Well-being Objectives for 2017/22 in August 2017 in the Corporate Plan. Overall you told us that the Council is showing progress on embedding the five ways of working.

You spoke in particular about the Prevention Strategy which has been adopted to continue the development of the Council's preventative approach. You also highlighted that the Public Services Board (PSB) has developed and recently published its Well-being Plan for Swansea, which will be delivered in collaboration with partners, including the Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service, and the Local Health Board. We noted that the Well-being Plan was in the process of being approved by the individual statutory members of the PSB.

You shared with us your concern about environmental risks. You reported that the Council's risk management policy and framework have been revised to incorporate the Sustainable Development Principle and to help identify and respond to longer-term strategic risks. Loss of trees (e.g. ash dieback) and other biodiversity has been identified as a gap in the risk register which is being addressed. You added that work was ongoing to move towards a more sustainable approach of dealing with weeds such as the manual removal of weeds rather than the use of harmful pesticides / weed killers. You assured the Committee that current practice was being challenged and discussions would be held within cabinet about alternative approaches.

Biodiversity

You talked about the importance of enhancing biodiversity, and the need to recognise this within the council's risk register. Tree loss was also of concern to the Committee, and need for a clear plan in place for their replacement. We also discussed the relationship between planning development and biodiversity and how conflicts are managed, and the importance of biodiversity impact assessments / ecology reports coming before decision-makers. We asked about the resources available to support this work.

You will be aware that we are commencing an in-depth scrutiny inquiry on Swansea's Natural Environment. Whilst Terms of Reference for this work are being drawn up I understand that it will focus on what can be done to maintain, enhance and promote the natural environment and biodiversity in Swansea. Councillor Peter Jones is the convener of the inquiry and following evidence gathering by the Panel we anticipate a final report, which will include recommendations to Cabinet, around October.

Suburban Centres & Community Regeneration Initiatives

You reported that a co-productive approach is being taken to the development of community hubs in certain areas. This will see the co-location of various public, third sector and community-led services. We noted that you were looking at pilot areas including Blaenymaes, Clydach & Townhill. We asked about the budget and timetable for these plans and you stated that discussions were still taking place. We understand this approach is the focus of the 'Services in the Community' cross-cutting Council review, one of six themed project priorities that the Council is working on. We note that it is still currently exploring opportunities around community hubs, and a possible pilot option for 2018/19. We also note that there have already been workshops with staff, councillors, community groups, third sector and the public to inform this project. We were particularly interested in the input housing services have had given the potential of district housing offices to grow as community hubs.

Members Community Budget Scheme

Committee members expressed some frustration at the time that can be taken in delivering agreed improvements, particularly around the design of new highway / traffic schemes. You agreed that the process needed to be reviewed to ensure community improvements can be delivered more quickly, although cited some problems that have hindered progress, including unexpected sickness in the Traffic Group and some funding issues. You acknowledged that a 'council question' has been raised on this matter and referred us to the full response that would be provided to the next Council meeting. You stressed to Councillors that requests must go directly to the nominated officer, Jayne Hunt, and not via individual departments / technical officers to avoid unnecessary delay.

Key Objectives

As a new portfolio the Committee was interested in what key objectives have been identified. We wanted to know what you, as Cabinet Members, wanted to achieve during the term of your office. You highlighted the following goals:

- To create a truly collaborative approach with our partners to achieve the well-being goals as part of the Well-being Plan and delivering services with a citizen focus - according to what the people of Swansea want / need, and tackling the issues that matter. You stated that improving citizen engagement with service providers would be key to this. (Please note that our PSB Scrutiny Panel is keen to monitor the actions that will flow from the Well-being Plan)
- To put the natural environment at the forefront, something you felt is neglected. You aimed for a stronger appreciation of the natural environment and green spaces, which you argued had clear health benefits and could reduce health inequalities.

- To embed the Well-being of Future Generations Act in all departments and for it to be considered meaningfully in all reports to Cabinet / Council. You welcomed the Committee challenging Cabinet Members about what they are doing to achieve the well-being goals and ways of working.

We look forward to meeting you again to ask about your progress in achieving these objectives.

Suggestions for Scrutiny

You identified two issues where you welcomed the involvement of scrutiny and felt should be considered in discussions about the future scrutiny work programme:

- Engagement – You told the Committee that there were aspects of both internal and external communication and engagement that could be improved e.g. better co-ordination of activity across the Council.
- Prevention – You highlighted that a new Prevention Strategy has recently been approved and welcomed future scrutiny to look at its impact and effectiveness.

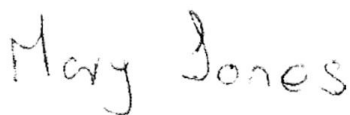
Our work planning conference will be held in June and we will give due regard to your suggestions.

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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