

Councillor Sam Pritchard
Convener, Renewable Energy Scrutiny
Working Group

Please ask for: Councillor Andrea Lewis
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Our Ref: AL/JW
Your Ref:
Date: 24 May 2018

Dear Councillor Pritchard

**CABINET MEMBER RESPONSE TO RENEWABLE ENERGY WORKING GROUP -
26th MARCH 2018**

Firstly, may I thank you for the positive response that officers and I received at the meeting of the Renewable Energy Working Group held on 26th March 2018, specifically in relation to the work that is being carried out by the Energy team within Corporate Building & Property Services.

In your letter dated 14th May 2018, several questions were raised for which you have asked for a response. I have answered each question below, however, should you require any further clarification please let me know.

1. We feel there should be more focus on global warming. This is why we are doing all this work with renewable energy.

As you know, I did acknowledge at the meeting that there should be a reference to global warming within the report presented which was an oversight. Although, I feel I should highlight that it is an important aspect of the Councils' overall Energy Strategy and is referenced in terms of mitigating the effects of climate change by reducing our carbon emissions.

2. We would like to see the people of Swansea benefit from any new renewable energy schemes including planning and housing development schemes.

The Energy Strategy for the Authority is focused on the benefits that may be achieved for the authority, council tenants and the people of Swansea through reduced energy costs, improved thermally efficient properties, Homes as Power Stations and innovation in relation to renewable energy products. These are continually being reviewed and considered for our new build and retrofit projects.

In addition to this, the Council will continue to review the potential for solar on more of our public buildings and the feasibility of solar farms utilising our Council land and assets. To date, we have installed solar panels on a number of our public buildings, which have an indirect benefit.

In Planning terms, as a Council we strive to achieve the most sustainable forms of development including layouts which maximise the benefits from solar gain. There are also policies within the UDP and emerging LDP which support the implementation of renewable energy schemes. However, even though we acknowledge there is a benefit for the people of Swansea, we are unable to force developers to include renewable energy within their schemes, as we do not have the powers via the Planning process to do so.

The Sustainable Homes Policy was a mechanism to drive higher standards however, this was removed from the Planning system in June 2016.

3. We were encouraged that the Authority is looking at a number of renewable energy schemes currently. We feel that 'Homes as Power Stations' is good way to lift people out of poverty.

I appreciate the recognition, from the Working Group, regarding the work ongoing and the exciting Homes as Power Stations strand of the City Deal. I agree wholeheartedly that this initiative can assist in lifting people out of fuel poverty. We are currently looking at retrofitting this specification on some of our off-gas Council properties, if this approach was rolled out to more Council homes it could have a hugely positive impact for some of our Council tenants.

In addition, elements of this design concept will also be considered for the Council's second pilot at Parc Yr Helyg in Birchgrove, which could help inform the More Homes Strategy.

4. We are aware that it is not in your remit but we feel the Welsh Government should provide incentives for organisations to produce their own energy, as micro generation is a good way to move forward.

As indicated, this is a matter for Welsh Government and not within my remit as a Council Cabinet member. In addition, I feel that UK Government incentive schemes would and should play an integral part in encouraging energy generation for organisations e.g. FiT.

5. We think the Authority should consider putting out information on energy efficiency to the public, for example, on line. We also suggest information is provided to new Council tenants.

The council already promotes its energy initiative but we will look to further extend any opportunities for its residents and tenants.

6. In relation to solar energy, we feel it is important that the Authority considers productivity and impact on the natural environment of wind farms and solar panels if it decides to go ahead with purchasing its own. The Working Group has concerns about wind energy. Solar energy is our preferred option (subject to planning permission).

We are grateful to the working group for expressing a preference, which is also aligned with the initial findings of the Council's review, with solar energy the preferred option for the Authority due to the low wind speeds within the Swansea area and the planning restrictions that are associated with wind farms. We acknowledge that solar energy developments have a minimal environmental impact compared with those associated with Wind Farms. Any decision to proceed would be subject to a full business case including an assessment of environmental implications.

7. We feel the Authority should explore other options for using hydro power more not just wait for the outcome of the Tidal Lagoon proposal. For example, there could be incentive schemes introduced.

As discussed at the Working Group, the Council will continue to explore any opportunities within its own asset base. Any incentives to support private schemes would have to come from National Government policy.

8. We understand that some schools have benefited from installing solar panels on their roofs. We feel the Council should encourage other schools and community buildings to take advantage of this.

Funding, for the current school solar installations, was provided via nationally set feed in tariffs and delivered by the Swansea Community Energy and Enterprise Scheme (SCEES). Unfortunately such funding is no longer available meaning the business case is severely limited. In any event, the installation to buildings is dependent on the shape, orientation and condition of the existing roof covering; the numbers that are suitable within Swansea are limited. That said, we will continue to monitor potential future opportunities for Council owned assets.

9. We are aware that it is not in your remit but the Working Group feels national government should be setting requirements on all new build – private and Council owned – to encourage energy generation and conservation.

As indicated, this is a matter for Welsh and UK government.

10. Biggest investment in Swansea currently is City Deal. Consideration needs to be given as to how renewable energy is going to be incorporated into this and also how Swansea is going to deal with the greater demand for energy for the City Deal.

I am pleased to confirm that the promotion of renewables and the wider energy efficiency agenda is an integral part of the City Deal. This is via the specific strand of "Homes as Power Stations" but also embedded in the wider range of projects and skills strands.

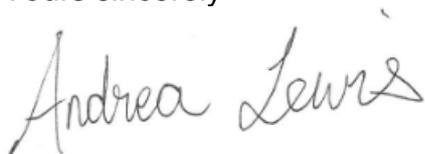
11. In 2017/18 budget a corporate development team was funded which included renewable energy but the Authority needs to think about resource going forward. There is a need for more resource as this department grows in responsibility in order for it to be sustainable.

Your comments are noted and will be borne in mind when any further decisions are made about funding the various council priorities when future council budgets are set although I am sure you will appreciate during such austere times the opportunity for additional funding is limited.

12. We understand that there are a lot of new projects in the pipeline. We feel that once these new projects are underway a follow up working group should be held as there will be a lot more to scrutinise.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with the Renewable Energy Working Group at some point in the future.

Yours sincerely



**COUNCILLOR ANDREA LEWIS
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, ENERGY & BUILDING SERVICES**