



**To/  
Councillor Robert Francis-Davies  
Cabinet Member for Investment,  
Regeneration & Tourism**

**BY EMAIL**

cc Cabinet Members

*Please ask for:  
Gofynnwch am:*

*Direct Line:  
Llinell Uniongyrochol:*

*e-Mail  
e-Bost:*

*Our Ref  
Ein Cyf:*

*Your Ref  
Eich Cyf:*

*Date  
Dyddiad:*

Scrutiny

01792 637257

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

SPC/2019-20/14

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Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member following the meeting of the Committee on 9 March 2020. It is about City Projects and Development, Archive Service, Investment and Economic Development, Tourism, Foreshore, Singleton Park, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery and Swansea Market.

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

### **Cabinet Member Question Session – 9 March**

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 9 March 2020 and answering questions on your work as Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism.

We are writing to you at a time of national emergency and hope this letter finds you well. Although scrutiny meetings are currently suspended until further notice, because of the coronavirus pandemic, we wanted to get this letter out to you, as we would normally do, hoping that in due course we can resume our work.

We appreciate you providing a written paper in support of your appearance at the Committee meeting. The Q & A session gave us an opportunity to explore priorities and achievements in relation to your areas of responsibility.

This letter reflects on what we learnt from the discussion, shares the views of the Committee, and highlights any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues are summarised below:

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## **City Projects and Development**

### Public Sector Hub

We asked you about work in relation to the introduction of a Public Sector Hub as part of Swansea Central Phase Two. We were interested to know about the location of the Hub (whether this was part of the Digital Village or not), which partners the Council has been in discussion with, and whether services would be moved into the Hub from other locations.

You told us that work was ongoing but it was envisaged that the Public Sector Hub would be a location for Council services, as well as some government departments. You could not go in to details but indicated that talks have been positive and suggested that some organisations may move within Swansea, and there could be a greater civil service presence in addition. You confirmed that the Hub location was the site of the current St. David's Shopping Centre.

We noted that the marketing of sites within the City Centre Regeneration Programme and other strategic sites, working in collaboration with the Department for International Trade, was going to be taking place at MIPIM at Cannes (a leading world real estate market event), however this was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic; but you were exploring other avenues to market sites and attract joint venture partners.

### Hafod Morfa Copperworks and Skyline development

We also asked you for an update on the Hafod Morfa Copperworks and Penderyn Distillery and Visitor Centre. You stated that sign off from the Heritage Lottery Fund was awaited. You added that once the business case was approved this development will kick-start activity and with footfall it will attract more businesses to the area. On Skyline you informed us that the company was still keen to develop the major scheme in Swansea and was in talks with the Welsh Government. You felt things were close to agreement and were hopeful that it will be tied up soon.

### **Archive Service**

We have previously discussed this with you and asked for an update on the West Glamorgan Archive Service and future accommodation plans. There was a suggestion that should a decision not be taken soon, there was a danger that contents may have to be moved to Cardiff.

You stated that relocation of the Archive Service was dependant on progress with Swansea Central Phase Two, which will guide timing of exit from the Civic Centre. You assured the Committee that there will be new home for the Library and Archives but were not in a position to confirm location. You were aware of the importance of the Archive Service and were committed to delivering a fitting home within the City Centre, with the space to grow. You

accepted this needed to be resolved sooner rather than later. You stated that once a Joint Venture partner was on board the Council will work with them to plan things across the five sites in Phase Two. We suggested that consideration could be given to housing the Archive Service within the Public Sector Hub, however you indicated that that was unlikely given the demand for office space.

## **Investment and Economic Development**

You reported that the Council will pilot a new approach to the design and specification of contracts for the Council to allow small businesses to bid for public contracts and increase the amount of money spent locally by the Council. We understood that the pilot will focus on changing the procurement approach for three construction based contracts, with learning from that process being used to change the overall procurement strategy within the Council.

In view of Brexit we asked about possible impact on this new approach and our procurement processes, as well as financial implications. You felt it was too early to say and would have to wait and see, however were clear that the policy to procure as much locally was the right approach.

## **Tourism**

The Committee followed up on your actions following recommendations made to Cabinet on Tourism, responded to by Cabinet on 21 November 2019. The Tourism Scrutiny Working Group, convened by Councillor Peter Jones, had met in May 2019 to look at the marketing and development of tourism in Swansea, including eco/sustainable tourism.

Amongst the issues picked up with you were around:

- the maintenance and cleanliness of key tourist destinations such as the City Centre and Marina, Mumbles, Langland, Caswell, parks etc. – whilst budgets were stretched we felt it was important to focus on the small number of key sites to raise standards, including the basics like litter bins, toilets, and fencing. You expressed frustration at the lack of funding to be able to do more to improve sites. You highlighted the fact that Swansea has many sites within its tourism offer and it was difficult to keep on top of maintenance in time of austerity, when other priorities took precedent.
- eco-tourism and possibility of extending cycle ways throughout Gower – you had committed to investigating grant funding to see how we can boost opportunities for people to enjoy the area by bike, making use of bridleways etc. You pointed out that the provision of cycleways was a matter for the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management to consider, however you would raise this with Cllr Mark Thomas to see what can be done.

We praised the improvements to walkway between Limeslade and Langland, a very popular route, making it more accessible.

### **Foreshore**

The Committee received a public question on the possibility of street lighting on foreshore from SA1 to Mumbles to promote use and safety. As the Council is considering options to increase visitor numbers through further development of the seafront, the member of the public felt that the installation of street lighting along the entire length of the footpath along the foreshore from SA1 to Mumbles would improve safety, and thereby increase the number of people prepared to walk and cycle along the path after dark.

Whilst you did not dispute the importance of well-lit public places for safety, you were frank that there was currently no funding to support the installation of lighting along the entire length of the seafront, as this was not a Council priority. However, as the Council was looking to increase the number of 'destinations' along the seafront, public lighting would be an important part of any future development for visitors.

### **Singleton Park**

We discussed the use of the Park for events and impact on biodiversity and wildlife, particularly with the number of events appearing to be increasing in the future.

Committee members felt that the Council should ensure consultation with relevant Parks Groups. We have heard that a Friends of Singleton Park Group has been established, in response to possible development at Home Farm. We noted that you were not aware of the existence of any such Singleton Park Group.

However, on the issue of events, you argued that Swansea needed more events (particular family friendly ones) because of the boost to the local economy. Whilst there may be short-term damage to grassy areas, you felt that there was minimal impact on people's ability to otherwise enjoy the Park all year round. You highlighted that the majority of events were small scale, with typically only one or two larger events each year. We noted that you were looking at attracting a Half Iron Man Triathlon (swim, bike, run) event in Swansea, which generates a lot of competitor and media interest, and would be a welcome event for local hoteliers.

You conceded that the Council does receive complaints about events, accepted the need to protect wildlife, and appreciated the need to balance so we do not spoil the park. Committee members accepted the need for balance but expressed some concern about the frequency of events and concentration in the summer months, which can limit general public access the park due to closure of footpaths.

You stated that there is a concentration of events due to the weather and for the large part of the year there are no events. You were keen for more activity in the Park, for example there was potential for the Swiss Cottage to be used to provide refreshments for park visitors.

### **Glynn Vivian Art Gallery**

It has been four years since the Gallery re-opened and we asked about visitor numbers, and your view on its success. You agreed to provide us with information on the visitor numbers at the Gallery.

You stated that there was no charge to enter the gallery and emphasised the importance and value of arts and cultural facilities, rather than financial viability.

You referred to the appointment of a new Curator with international experience in producing exhibitions who has taken the programming to a new level. The Gallery has also continued to develop and grow its links with the British Museum, The Tate and the British Council. You also mentioned the increase in special events and an improved food offer at the Gallery.

We agreed that it was a wonderful facility and would encourage more school visits, something perhaps for school governors to push forward. You felt one of the issues holding back school visits could be the cost of transport, but agreed that it was an important educational resource that Swansea was lucky to have.

### **Swansea Market**

We praised all concerned for Swansea Market being awarded Britain's Best Large Indoor Market, and the renovations that have been done in recent years.

You reported that funding has been secured to deliver a Market Improvement Plan including the launch of a new look website. Physical improvement work undertaken has included the repair of key roof leaks, an upgrade to the electrical infrastructure and market lighting and bird proofing measures. You added that work was planned to start around May on the toilets in the market, which has been a source of complaint from both the public and traders themselves, and a changing facility.

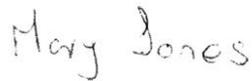
We asked about the lettings strategy and plans to utilise the space in the central section to increase income. You stated that a number of ideas were being looked at for the central area, including pop-up stalls and/or an open area to sit. You stated that over the coming year that area will be utilised better. We felt it was important that the market retains its charm.

## Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter, but would be grateful for information on visitor numbers at the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. However, we do not require you to respond with a formal letter. An email from yourself in due course will be sufficient on this occasion.

We will then include our letter and any correspondence received in response in the agenda of the next available Committee meeting. 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

✉ [clr.mary.jones@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:clr.mary.jones@swansea.gov.uk)