



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

BY EMAIL

Councillor Rob Stewart
Cabinet Member for Finance & Strategy
(Leader)

CC Clive Lloyd

*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 636292

scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

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Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Finance & Strategy (Leader) following the meeting of the Panel on 25 January 2017. It provides the views and comments of the Panel on the Fees and Charges report.

Dear Councillor Stewart,

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel 25 January 2017

We are grateful to Cllr Clive Lloyd and Chris Williams, Head of Commercial Services, for attending our meeting and taking us through the report on Fees and Charges. We identified this piece of work to be included in our work plan as fees and charges for services make a significant contribution to the Council's finances and we wanted to gain a better understanding of what fees and charges are levied and the processes and rationale that are used to set payment levels. We recognise that a significant amount of work was required to bring together the large quantity of data and we appreciate the efforts of the officers involved.

Considering the large amount of information provided we consider this to be a starting point for our scrutiny of the fees and charges levied by the authority and have identified a number of key areas that we need to meet with the relevant officers who will be the subject experts, in order to further our understanding – these are listed below.

We also have a number of questions for clarification purposes that we hope can be responded to via letter. We have written to you as the Cabinet Member with overall responsibility but recognise that you will need to consult with the Cabinet Members whose portfolios cover the specific services mentioned.

For ease of reference I refer to the items as they are listed in the appendices of our agenda pack for 25 January. This is attached for your information.

The Panel agreed that it is essential that there is an effective and accurate way to determine costs before pricing structures are set. We were advised that the commercial services section and finance have devised a “full cost recovery” calculation” which is used to establish costs.

Appendix A - People directorate fees and charges

Adult Services

The Panel would like an explanation for the higher costs for long term residential care for young people, mental health and people with learning disabilities, as compared to elderly care.

We also noted that the costs of private care provision for these types of care appear to be significantly lower than council-run care homes – and would like to understand the reasons for this.

Education Planning and Resources

The Panel noted the cost of a termly bus pass of £410. Is this the actual cost that is paid by an individual if they are not entitled to a free bus pass?

Poverty & Prevention

Is the £25 management fee for allotments charged on an annual basis, in addition to the annual plot fees?

Appendix B - Place directorate fees and charges (commercially sensitive data)

Corporate Building & Property Services – Estates

The Panel agreed that it would like a further discussion on the fees that are charged in relation to Estates and Property Fees. We intend to invite the relevant officers to our next meeting on 22 February to provide us with more detailed information and advice.

Housing & Public Protection - Building Control

Do the charges made by Building Control comply with the requirement from the Local Government Act 2003 that the income from charging for a service should not exceed the cost of providing that service?

Appendix C - Place directorate fees and charges (general data)

Cultural Services – Boat Parking

The Panel noted the charges made for Boat Parking and would like an explanation of how these charges are calculated and if any comparisons/benchmarking have been made with other areas/providers. The Panel would also like to know if consideration has been given to increasing these charges, for example, to provide closer parity to car parking charges.

Cultural Services – Brangwyn Hall

The Panel would like an explanation of how the charges relating to the Brangwyn Hall have been reached and whether any comparisons/benchmarking have taken place.

Cultural Services – Hire of Parks

Does the hire cost also include costs that relate to repair of damage caused by usage or is a separate charge made for this?

Cultural Services – Indoor Leisure

The Panel would like an explanation on how the charges for indoor leisure are calculated and if any comparisons/benchmarking have been made with other areas/providers.

The Panel would also like to know whether the free swimming initiative is still in place.

Cultural Services – Outdoor Leisure

The Panel noted missing data for the cost of hiring sports pitches and ask that this is provided.

The Panel would also like to know whether charges for pitch hire are different/lower for self-managed clubs?

Economic Regeneration & Planning – City Centre Management

The Panel wish to know the reasons for lower car parking charges for blue badge holders, and whether this applies to all car parks across the City and County.

Would the proposed introduction of charges for car parks on Sundays affect blue badge holders?

Economic Regeneration & Planning – Mobility hire

The Panel noted that the car parking spaces that are reserved for users of the mobility scooter hire service are often unused and recommend that consideration is given to extending their use to blue badge holders generally and not just those who use the service.

Highways and Transportation – Neighbourhood Working

The Panel noted that charges are made for A-Frames and seats for pavement cafes but no charge is included for tables, therefore would like to know why tables are not also charged for.

Highways and Transportation – Marina

The Panel noted the cost comparison information that is used to inform the charges made for the Marina, however we feel that the cost comparison is too limited and should be widened to similar facilities across the UK, to ensure that the maximum income is being raised.

Housing & Public Protection – Cremations/Burial Charges

The Panel would like an explanation why the cost of Muslim burials is significantly higher than standard burials.

Housing & Public Protection – Registrars

The Panel would like to be provided with the figures for the number of citizenship ceremonies carried out, including a breakdown of the numbers carried out on weekends and bank holidays.

Appendix D - Corporate Services fees and charges (commercially sensitive data)

No specific questions raised.

Appendix E - Corporate Services fees and charges (general data)

Legal and Democratic Services – Legal Services

The Panel would like an explanation of how the legal costs are calculated and if any comparisons/benchmarking have been made with other areas/providers.

Your response

We would be grateful however if you could refer to our specific recommendations/requests for further information as listed above. Please provide your response by 9 March 2017.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Chris Holley

Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

✉ cllr.chris.holley@swansea.gov.uk