



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

**To/
Councillor Will Evans,
Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty**

BY EMAIL

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SPC/2014-15/13

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*Date
Dyddiad:*

10 April 2015

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty following the meeting of the Committee on the 16th March 2015. It reflects on the question and answer session held with the Cabinet Member about their portfolio responsibilities, including Target Areas, Health Inequalities, Welfare Reforms, the LIFT Programme and Community Food Growing. It includes conclusions and proposals for the Cabinet Member.

Dear Councillor Evans,

Cabinet Member Question Session – 16 March

Thank you for your attendance at the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 16 March 2015, answering questions on your work and for submitting a written report ahead of the meeting. Your report helped to provide a focus for the session and explore priorities, actions, achievements and impact, in relation to your areas of responsibility.

You emphasised the cross cutting nature of this new portfolio and joint working with other Cabinet Members. You also provided a stark indication of the nature of the problem, and cited the growth in the number of food banks in the area, impact of austerity measures, and inequalities in Swansea. We are writing to you in order to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion, share the views of the committee, and raise any outstanding issues / actions for your response. The main issues discussed are summarised below:

Target Areas

We noted that the anti-poverty portfolio is a new cabinet portfolio for the Council and taking on board elements of the previous leaders, and the old Target Areas Cabinet member portfolio. As far as the committee was aware

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the Target Areas approach was adopted as Council policy in July 2012, however you seemed to have a different view on this. You stated that the emphasis was tackling poverty wherever it existed, not a defined area. The committee would like some clarity on if / when / how the policy has changed and what strategies are in place instead to tackle poverty and deprivation in the areas worst affected, with the greatest need.

We have previously identified Target Areas as a future Scrutiny Working Group topic. This would be to get an assessment on progress with target areas work and enable scrutiny councillors to ask about achievements and the impact of this approach. Therefore your response on our question above will be very helpful to guide our thinking on this and determine whether this should remain in the work programme.

Health Inequalities

You mentioned to the committee some figures which showed significant differences in life expectancy between east and west Swansea. We believe you stated that it was as much as 23 years. Could you provide some clarification about this information? The indication is that the gap is increasing. What we did not understand was how east and west Swansea was being defined in this assessment.

Welfare Reforms

You stated that one of your key portfolio objectives was mitigating against the impact of Welfare Reform, particularly the introduction of universal credit. We asked about the production and implementation of a Local Delivery Framework for the first phase of roll out of Universal Credit. You stated that this was in progress however we would appreciate some clarification about when the framework will be available given the roll out is planned for July 2015. Also can you provide some more information about the role of Cabinet Members and (in particular) all Ward Members in the development and delivery with regard to implementation of Universal Credit?

We acknowledged that a number of seminars are being arranged for councillors, staff and partners in order to raise awareness on requirements and potential impacts. We asked about the relationship between the authority and the Department for Work and Pensions and noted some issues relating to information and communication which we hope are being resolved.

LIFT Programme

We asked for an update on the LIFT project in the North West Cluster Penderry, which is focussed on getting people back into work and on to the jobs ladder. You stated that the programme was successful within Penderry, engaging with workless households, those who have spent more than six

months out of work or training, and helped people to gain skills that will increase employment prospects.

We were interested to know how the programme was developing. You pointed out that this was a programme funded by the Welsh Government and depended on evaluation against targets and continuity of funding. We noted that the initial 12 months of the Programme was about to come up. We were pleased to hear that between April and December 2014 127 adults had found employment and many more had gained a qualification and gained IT skills. However we noted this was from the overall Communities First programme not specifically the LIFT Programme. It would be helpful if you could provide some information about achievements directly related to the LIFT Programme.

Community Food & Growing

We looked at your savings targets for 2015/16 which included a reduction in the Grow Local Grants, and to reconfigure the Community Food and Growing team and look establish a Community Interest Company. You stressed the need to make savings and cited successful examples elsewhere. The committee however was interested in the rationale for outsourcing the food and growing service, and how this will be delivered and managed responsibly. We asked how this related to community allotments sites and noted that the plan did not include allotments, responsibility for which would be retained in-house.

Your Response

In your response we would appreciate your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter. We would be grateful, however, if you could specifically refer to:

- Our question about the position with regard to the Target Areas approach previously agreed - if / when / how the policy has changed and what strategies are in place instead to tackle poverty and deprivation in the areas worst affected, with the greatest need;
- Our request for further information about the difference in life expectancy between east and west Swansea;
- Our concern about when the Local Delivery Framework will be available given the roll out of Universal Credit is planned for July 2015. We also wanted to know more about the identified role of all Ward Members in the development and delivery
- Our request for information about achievements directly related to the LIFT Programme; and
- Our concern about changes to the Community Food & Growing team and rationale for a different service model. Could you also provide confirmation whether responsibility for allotments will revert to the Parks Service?

Please provide your response by 1 May. We will then include both letters in the agenda of the next available committee meeting.

Finally, we look forward to meeting you again to follow up on portfolio developments and hearing about achievements and impact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jones".

COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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