

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT CIVIC CENTRE, SWANSEA ON MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER
2014 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A M Day (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
A M Cook	P Downing	J W Jones
A C S Colburn	E W Fitzgerald	P M Meara
D W Cole	J E C Harris	R V Smith
J P Curtice	T J Hennegan	M Thomas
N J Davies		

C-opted Members

D Anderson-Thomas, S Joiner

Officers:

J Hooper	- Directorate Lawyer
D McKenna	- Overview and Scrutiny Manager
B Madahar	- Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
S Woon	- Democratic Services Officer

45 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

An apology for absence were received from Councillor A J Jones.

46 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL & PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests was declared:

Councillor M Thomas – Personal – Minute No. 52 (Scrutiny Work Programme 2014 – 15) and Minute No. 54 (Scrutiny Letters). My wife works for the Authority in Adult Social Services. My Mother uses Adult Social Services. Councillor M Thomas stated that he had dispensation from the Standards Committee.

47 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 4 August, 2014, be agreed as a correct record.

48 **PROHIBITION OF WHIPPED VOTES AND DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS.**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

49 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION - CITIZEN, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP & DEMOCRACY PORTFOLIO.**

The Chair advised that the Cabinet Member for Citizen, Community Leadership and Democracy had conveyed apologies as she was unable to attend.

RESOLVED that the matter be deferred to a future next meeting.

50 **WALES AUDIT OFFICE SCRUTINY REPORT: GOOD SCRUTINY? GOOD QUESTION!**

Tim Buckle and Helen Keatley from the Wales Audit Office gave an overview of the findings and recommendations of the report of the Auditor General for Wales called 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question!' on scrutiny in Welsh local government and implications.

They outlined the rationale for the study, the approach taken, and evidence which informed the findings. They talked about the increasing emphasis on scrutiny, not just in terms of accountability but as a tool for improvement of local services, and some weaknesses identified in the recent report of the Williams Commission. The process of the study involved local authority self-evaluation, peer review and challenge. As opposed to a detailed inspection or review, the report was founded on observations over the last 2 years and good practice. The aim was to develop a model for what good scrutiny looks like, and referred the committee to the outcomes and characteristics for local government overview and scrutiny which had been put together.

The report concluded that local government scrutiny in Wales was improving but councils need to do more to develop consistently rigorous scrutiny to increase public accountability in decision making. The report highlighted that the impact of scrutiny was not always clear, although recognised the challenges in the measurement of good scrutiny. There was also some confusion evident about the roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members and Senior Officers in relation to attendance at scrutiny. Other issues highlighted related to chairing and of the planning and purpose of scrutiny activities, as well as the quality and range of information provided to scrutiny, and the way it is dealt with. The report also called for a better alignment of scrutiny with the activities of auditors (internal and external) and inspectors and better communication (e.g. around work planning) given similarities in their work, and building upon their findings. Public engagement, although a long standing issue, was

also highlighted as an area for improvement. The work of Participation Cymru was referenced as a source of useful advice.

Members' asked questions of the representatives from the Wales Audit Office in relation to:

- communication with councillors during the study
- the continuation of Peer Learning & Evaluation Teams (comprising scrutiny members and officer) that were developed as part of this study;
- how scrutiny can benefit from closer working with internal/external auditors and inspectors;
- the outcomes of the national review of public engagement and role of Participation Cymru;
- whether scrutiny offers enough opportunities for councillors to address issues that they are personally passionate about;
- self-evaluation and external peer assessment;
- difficulties associated with measuring the impact and effectiveness of scrutiny; and
- whether different aspects of scrutiny (e.g performance monitoring, in-depth inquiries) have different levels of impact.

The next step for the committee would be to consider the recommendations made within the Good Scrutiny? Good Question! report and incorporate actions into improvement plans.

The recommendations made by the Auditor General for Wales are:

R1: Clarify the role of executive members and senior officers in contributing to scrutiny.

R2: Ensure that scrutiny members, and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny.

R3: Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to:

- provide a clear rationale for topic selection;
- be more outcome focussed;
- ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and
- align scrutiny programmes with the council's performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements.

R4: Ensure that scrutiny draws effectively on the work of audit, inspection and regulation and that its activities are complementary with the work of external review bodies.

R5: Ensure that external review bodies take account of scrutiny work programmes and the outputs of scrutiny activity, where appropriate, in planning and delivering their work.

R6: Ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function's effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes.

R7: Undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the 'outcomes and characteristics of effective local government overview and scrutiny' developed by the Wales Scrutiny Officers' Network.

R8: Implement scrutiny improvement action plans developed from the Wales Audit Office improvement study.

R9: Adopt Participation Cymru's 10 Principles for Public Engagement in improving the way scrutiny engages with the public and stakeholders.

It was noted that later this year the Wales Audit Office would be carrying out an in-depth corporate governance review around November which will look further at progress with and the impact of the Council's scrutiny arrangements.

The chair thanked Tim and Helen and looked forward to future advice on improving scrutiny in Swansea.

RESOLVED that the report and recommendations be considered further to identify actions for improvement.

51 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - SERVICE IMPROVEMENT & FINANCE SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL.**

Councillor M H Jones, Convenor, Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel, provided a progress update on the work of the Panel.

The Panel had held three meetings since the start of the municipal year and commenced a productive, on-going discussion with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources which had led to an increase in the Panel's involvement in the budget process for 2015/16.

The Panel was continuing with its usual work or regularly scrutinising quarterly performance and budget monitoring reports, which also included the Policy Commitment Tracker and Budget Savings Tracker.

The Panel had produced 3 Convenor's letters to various Cabinet Members providing its views and comments on a range of performance and finance issues.

The future work programme included:

- Review of budget engagement strategy – September 2014
- Consideration of the mid year budget statement – Oct/Nov 2014
- Consideration of public engagement outcomes – December 2014
- Review of budget proposals – February 2015

In addition to engaging with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources the Panel was also increasing its contact with other Cabinet Members. This is in line with the Scrutiny Programme Committee's previous instruction to the Panel to hold question sessions with a range of Cabinet Members to monitor the implementation and impact of budget decisions within their portfolios. The first Cabinet Member to attend the Panel to discuss these issues would be the Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills at the September meeting. The Cabinet Member for Children & Young People has also been invited to attend due to the overlaps between their portfolios (confirmation awaited).

The Panel has also identified the new ICT Contract as a key piece of work that would benefit from scrutiny involvement. Therefore this item will be added to the work plan. The Panel also feels that Flying Start performance would benefit from closer scrutiny and will work this into its timetable.

Finally, the Panel has also included some key service performance reports within its work plan, including Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Performance Report and the Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring.

The convener referred to the workload of the Panel and challenges, and praised the support provided to the Panel by the Scrutiny Officer. She informed the committee that the next meeting of the Panel was taking place on 17 September,

The Chair thanked the Panel for its work and reminded the convener that the Panel should refer any issues for more detailed scrutiny to the committee or where appropriate to other Performance Panels, if the Panel feels that further work is required following consideration of performance data. This should help manage the work of the Panel.

A discussion ensued regarding the timeliness of Cabinet Member responses to conveners' letter and the chair stated any issues should be referred to him.

RESOLVED that the progress report be noted.

52 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2014 - 15.**

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Work Programme 2014/15. The report explained the background and purpose of the Scrutiny Work Programme and the current position of all scrutiny activities. The Work Programme referred to the work currently active, showing progress and the established Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups. The Work Plan timetable for future Committee meetings was also provided.

The committee was reminded of the changes to the work programme agreed at the last meeting, that is to establish a Child & Family Services Performance Panel, and to set up pre-inquiry working groups for potential inquiries into Transformation of Adult Social Services; and Corporate Culture.

The committee was informed of an opportunity to access support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny who were doing a project on transformation and commissioning, which could benefit the scrutiny of the transformation of adult social services. The

committee were supportive of any engagement with the Centre for Public Scrutiny that could add value to what was a challenging and critical agenda, as long as it did not delay this work.

The chair also informed the committee that consideration was still being given to the 2 suggestions for scrutiny made by councillors referred to in section 7 of the report.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The Terms of Reference for the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel be **AGREED** with an additional word under the section 'What is the Purpose of the Panel' – The Panel will receive and **request** relevant performance reports to monitor and challenge assessments on service performance and quality in respect of children's social services.
- b. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator contact the Convenor of the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to pass on the interest of S Joiner (Co-opted Member) in engaging with the Panel's consideration of library performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.
- c. The report of the Data Unit Wales on Local Authority Performance for 2013/14 be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

53 **MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS.**

The Chair presented a report which advised of changes required to the membership of the various Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

RESOLVED that the following membership be **AGREED**:

- a. Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel:
Remove Councillor M Thomas and Councillor C Philpott;
- b. Transforming Adult Social Services Scrutiny Inquiry: Membership as reported agreed;
- c. Corporate Culture Scrutiny Inquiry: Membership as reported agreed with the addition of Councillor J Curtice, Councillor P Meara and Councillor A Colburn;
- d. Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel: Membership as reported agreed;
- e. Corporate Building & Property Services Scrutiny Working Group: Membership as reported agreed;
- f. The above Panels / Working Groups (b-d) be asked to identify a convener which should be reported back to the committee for confirmation.

54 **SCRUTINY LETTERS:**

The Chair reported the updated Scrutiny Letters Log and referred to the recent correspondence between Scrutiny and Cabinet Members.

RESOLVED that the letters and action log be **NOTED**.

55 **SCRUTINY DISPATCHES - SEPTEMBER 2014.**

The Chair reported the draft Scrutiny Dispatches for agreement.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be agreed and submitted to Council on 30 September, 2014.

56 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS FOR 2014/15 MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 4.30P.M. EXCEPT WHERE NOTED);**

The dates and times of future meeting for 2014/15 Municipal Year were submitted for information.

The meeting ended at 5.45 p.m.

CHAIR