

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1 - CIVIC CENTRE ON MONDAY, 27
OCTOBER 2014 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A M Day (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

A M Cook
A C S Colburn
D W Cole
J P Curtice

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
T J Hennegan
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

R V Smith
R A Clay
G J Tanner

Co-opted Members

S Joiner

Also present:

Councillor J C Bayliss, Convenor, Convenor of the Street Scene Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

Councillor P R Hood-Williams, Convenor, Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel

Officers:

N Havard - Directorate Lawyer
B Madahar - Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator
S Woon - Democratic Services Officer

77 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S E Crouch, N J Davies, A J Jones, P M Meara and Mr D Anderson-Thomas.

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

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

79 **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.

80 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 29 September, 2014, be agreed as a correct record.

Minute No. 70 (d)

The Chair advised that a Special Scrutiny Programme Committee would be convened for Thursday, 13 November, 2014 to examine the upcoming Cabinet report in respect of the Proposed Lease of Underhill Park to Mumbles Community Association.

Minute No. 72 (b)

The Chair advised that he would be meeting with the Leader on 29 October, 2014, to discuss timescales for Cabinet Member responses to Scrutiny Letters.

81 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT:**

Councillor J C Bayliss, Convenor of the Street Scene Scrutiny Inquiry Panel, presented the final report and sought approval for its submission to Cabinet.

Councillor J C Bayliss detailed the aims of the inquiry, the evidence considered and the conclusions and recommendations.

The key issues arising from the review included:

- Alternative models of service delivery and community development initiatives have the potential to reduce service demand and provide additional service delivery resources; these should be identified, developed and supported where possible;
- The Highways and Transportation and Waste Management services area are currently facing significant budgetary pressures and this will continue into the future;
- Maintaining a clean and safe street scene environment is important to residents and for the Council's reputation; and
- Residents, tenants and community groups are important stakeholders; they value good quality communication and information and are a good source of feedback on services.

Councillor J C Bayliss highlighted that a number of public engagement events were held as part of the review. He stated that there were some serious challenges because of reduced funding and required new ways of providing services. The importance of communicating well with residents who report issues was also highlighted, and providing feedback. The report also argued that there should be better coordination between street cleansing and refuse collections to improve the street scene. The Panel was concerned that the emphasis should be on quality rather than speed. There was endorsement for the Winter Wardens scheme that encourages residents to take some responsibility for maintenance issues e.g. salt bins. The committee discussed the important work of council enforcement officers and how 'bodycams' have helped with their understanding of the role.

Cllr Bayliss highlighted the contribution of Gordon Gibson who was a co-opted member of the Panel.

The Committee debated the report and asked questions of Councillor J C Bayliss who responded accordingly.

The Chair summarised the discussions and requested that the covering report, which will accompany the report, emphasise the following:

- a. street scene services are critical - street cleanliness is always high on the list of community priorities and affects everyone
- b. the evidence gathered by the Panel included consultation with the public and residents groups, and generated a good response
- c. the public value good communication and residents would benefit from information about contacts within the street scene service
- d. it is important to give feedback to customers when they report issues
- e. better coordination between refuse collection and street cleansing operations was necessary

The Committee thanked the convener and Panel for its work.

RESOLVED that the report along with a covering report emphasising the Committee's discussions, proceed to Cabinet.

82 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL.**

The Convenor of the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel, Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams, presented a progress report on the work of the Panel.

The committee discussed the work of the Panel and reflected on the decision to split the work of the former Wellbeing Performance Panel and benefit of that change. Councillor Hood-Williams stated that it was a sensible decision to renew focus on Child & Family Services. He advised that the Panel had met on one occasion since the committee's decision to re-establish this Panel, and summarised the issues raised following its recent consideration of performance:

- Referrals trending upwards;
- Improved/increased use of the Regional Integrated Family Support Service;
- Drop off in the number of initial and core assessments completed with timescale;
- Staff supervision;
- Numbers of children ceasing to become looked after has dropped compared to the previous year;
- Approval rates for foster carers and adopters.

Councillor Hood-Williams mentioned that the Panel received its second follow-up report on the previous scrutiny review of leaving care services. The panel remained concerned about the effectiveness of the contract/partnership to provide leaving care services and had requested that a further report be brought back to the panel in 3 months on the issue. The panel felt unable to sign off the review as completed until it was satisfied that the services provided were effective.

The Chair stated that he was very interested in the interaction between performance panels and cabinet members, and there was an expectation that conveners would focus their future reports on the impact of their work and effect on services.

83 **FUTURE TRENDS FOR SWANSEA.**

The Sustainable Development Team Leader assisted by the Sustainable Development Policy Officer, presented 'Future Trends for Swansea' which gave an insight into current understanding of future trends likely to impact the planning and delivery of Council Services.

The Chair stated that this work was intended to support the development of scrutiny by building long term thinking, future risks and sustainability principles into scrutiny activities. In order to focus on sustainability a Working Group has already been agreed by the committee in the work programme and expressions of interest were to be sought to confirm the convener / membership. The committee had also agreed to ensure that the issue of sustainability and long term thinking should be a recurring theme for future cabinet member questions sessions. Members were also encouraged to use the information to support any other scrutiny activities they are involved in.

The chair stated that it was important that the information on future trends should inform future scrutiny work programmes, and that longer-term thinking should be integrated into all scrutiny activities, so that scrutiny asks the right questions.

The Sustainable Development Team Leader referred to the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Bill which seeks to strengthen existing governance arrangements for improving the well-being of Wales to ensure that present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. She advised that trend forecasting was not a new concept and had been used previously in Planning and Housing to help inform and develop services.

The Council had been chosen as a 'model' authority to work with the WLGA in advance of the Future Generations (Wales) Bill to see what changes are needed in local government and for lessons to be shared with other authorities. The document was based on best available data and evidence from credible sources. It was noted that the current model of governance would need to change by 2025 in order to manage the big predicted trends around demographics.

The purpose of the document was to be used as an informative tool in terms of shaping services for the future. She stated that whilst the data itself was not absolute or definitive the paper aimed to paint a picture of future to stimulate thinking about future policies and services and preparing for the challenges ahead. It highlighted the questions that should be asked of decision-makers that would be very useful for scrutiny.

The Future Trends report stimulated much debate. The Committee talked about the difficulties sometimes of getting national and local statistics to match. There was a particular focus now on the housing figures in the report. Questions about demographics (migration /social trends), rural deprivation and digital inclusion was also raised. Members were interested on the various sources of information used to compile the paper.

In response to questions, the Sustainable Development Team Leader confirmed that the paper, as it is updated, will include reference to issues around rural deprivation and access to services (e.g. library services). It was noted that the purpose of the document was to stimulate discussion and further in-depth inquiries into areas of concern.

84 **SCHEDULE FOR FUTURE CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSIONS.**

The Chair presented the Committee with a draft schedule of future Cabinet Member Question Sessions following recent Cabinet changes.

RESOLVED that the timetable of future Cabinet Member Question Sessions be **APPROVED**.

85 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2014-2015.**

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2014-2015. 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 Chair updated colleagues in respect of progress with pre-decision scrutiny of the scheduled Cabinet report titled 'Proposed Lead of Underhill Park to Mumbles Community Association'. The report was currently scheduled for consideration by Cabinet on 18 November, 2014 and proposed that a special committee meeting be arranged for 13 November at 2.00 pm.

The Chair also mentioned that:

- a) the Education Inclusion Inquiry Panel met on 23 Oct. The Panel discussed the findings of the departmental review and gave views which will feed into the development of an action plan. The Panel will meet again to consider that action plan – anticipated before the end of this calendar year and will then give its view about whether further scrutiny is required.

- b) A response to the Planning Services Working Group letter has now been received and will be on the agenda for the next committee meeting for discussion.
- c) The Transforming Adult Social Services Panel is aiming to structure its work plan against key decisions in the TASS process and will be receiving ongoing support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny. It was noted that a copy of the independent review report on older people's services was now available and would be discussed by the Panel.

There was some interest shown in the Tidal Lagoon project from the point of view of the impact this may have on Swansea, particularly economic regeneration. It was agreed to write to the relevant Cabinet Member expressing the interest from scrutiny to have some information on this, seeking advice about relevant contacts within and outside of the council, and to consider how best a scrutiny discussion on this matter could be facilitated, and the best time for this to take place.

The Committee restated its commitment to getting the public more involved in and raising awareness of the work of scrutiny. The chair stated that councillors could do more to champion this. He also stated that panels and working groups should be proactive in considering the best form of engagement e.g. co-option, consultation. The chair was asked to consider whether it would be effective to take Scrutiny Programme Committee meetings out into the community.

RESOLVED that the Chair write to the relevant Cabinet Member regarding the interest from scrutiny on the Tidal Lagoon project.

86 **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:

- a. Councillor P R Hood-Williams be appointed as convenor in respect of Child & Family Services Performance Panel;
- b. Councillor U C Clay be appointed as convenor in respect of the Social Care at Home Inquiry Panel;
- c. Councillor U C Clay be appointed as convenor in respect of the Transforming Adult Social Services Panel;
- d. Councillors S M Jones, J P Curtice and E T Kirchner be added to the Child & Family Services Performance Panel;
- e. Councillors K E Marsh and D W Cole be added to the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel; and
- f. Councillor C L Philpott be removed from the Social Care at Home Inquiry Panel.

87 **SCRUTINY LETTERS:**

The Chair reported the updated Scrutiny Letters Log and referred to the recent correspondence between scrutiny and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy.

In terms of the letters shown as outstanding the Chair stated that:

- a) a response to the Planning Services Working Group had now been received and will be on the next committee agenda
- b) the letter sent by the former Wellbeing Panel was being reviewed by the new Child & Family Services Panel and any outstanding issues would be incorporated into a fresh letter from that Panel.
- c) Committee letters from the July and August meetings, and the letter from Schools Panel sent on 9 Sep have been referred to new cabinet members for response and were expected to be received in time for next committee agenda.

Further to the committee's request to amend the deadline given to cabinet members for responding to letters, the chair of the committee stated that he was meeting with the Leader to discuss. It was accepted that a slight adjustment to 21 days would represent 3 calendar weeks and would ensure that a deadline for response would never fall on a weekend. The change itself required an amendment to the constitution which would be reported to a future council meeting.

RESOLVED that the letters and action log be noted.

88 **SCRUTINY DISPATCHES - NOVEMBER 2014.**

The Chair reported the draft Scrutiny Dispatches for agreement.

Councillor Hennegan wanted the committee to note the recent interviews involving some members as part of the recent WLGA peer review and reflected positive comments about the Scrutiny Team and support provided to members.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be agreed and submitted to Council on 2 December, 2014.

89 **SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENT SESSION: MAKING SCRUTINY MORE EFFECTIVE:
WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER, 4.00-6.00PM, ROOFTOP CAFÉ BAR, GRAND
THEATRE**

The Chair referred to the forthcoming Scrutiny Development Session which would be supported by the Centre of Public Scrutiny on Wednesday, 5 November, 2014. There was some concern about the date and time of the session and a number of apologies had been received.

RESOLVED that the session be rescheduled to ensure maximum attendance.

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

The date and time of upcoming Panel/Working Groups meetings were submitted for information. These were listed to help increase the visibility of this work and encourage public engagement. It was suggested that information about venue of meetings should also be provided in future committee agendas.

91 **DATE AND TIME OF UPCOMING PANEL/WORKING GROUP MEETINGS.**

The date and time of upcoming Panel/Working Groups meetings were submitted for information.

The meeting ended at 6.05 pm

CHAIR