

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A M Day (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
A M Cook	N J Davies	J W Jones
A C S Colburn	E W Fitzgerald	P M Meara
D W Cole	T J Hennegan	

Co-opted Members

D Anderson-Thomas, S Joiner

Also present:

Councillor F M Gordon, Convenor, Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel

Councillor J A Hale, Convenor, Public Engagement Scrutiny Panel

Officers:

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

62 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J P Curtice, P Downing and R V Smith.

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

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

64 **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.

65 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 1 September, 2014, be agreed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Minute No. 49

Remove the reference to 'next' in the resolution.

Minute No. 50

Minutes to reflect that all Labour Members left the meeting after the discussion.

Further to minute no. 52 the Chair advised that the Centre for Public Scrutiny are happy to offer support in relation to scrutiny of the transformation of adult social services and would be attending the first meeting to discuss this.

66 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - SCHOOLS**
SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL.

The Convenor of the Schools Performance Panel provided a progress update on the work of the Panel.

The Panel has held four meetings since the start of the Municipal year and has been involved in the following areas of work:

- Progress with the EOTAs Pathways external review;
- The advice and assistance given to schools and governing bodies around tackling the performance of teachers and dealing with competence issues and recruitment of senior staff in schools;
- The issue of elective home education which included safeguarding and measurement of performance;
- The support for schools from challenge leaders in order to ensure consistency of advice and guidance to schools;
- Estyn Inspections publications and any advisory/practice documents.

The future work programme included:

- Meetings with Head teachers and Governing Bodies as part of the outcomes identified in the Regional Support, Challenge and Intervention Framework;
- Examining behaviour and restorative practice and the impact these have on children's performance;
- Examination of the Annual Education Performance Data and how schools are using their pupil deprivation grants to improve performance of children who receive free school meals.

A discussion ensued regarding the timeliness of Cabinet Member responses to Convenors' letters and the Chair stated any issues should be referred to him.

Members' discussed:

- the impact of the Panel and how well its is working
- Head teacher's scope of responsibility (ie responsibility for buildings);
- Problems with Science teaching in primary schools;
- Concerns regarding home tuition.

The Chair referred to the work of the Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Panel who will be looking at issues in relation to education other than at school. The Panel had been temporarily suspended as a result of a departmental review but would commence works shortly. In response to an offer by the Chair, Councillor N J Davies confirmed that he would like to participate in the work of the Panel.

The Chair thanked the Panel for its work and reminded the Convenor that the Panel should refer any issues, including any requests 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.

RESOLVED that the work progress report be noted.

67 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT:**

Councillor J A Hale, Convenor of the Public Engagement Scrutiny Inquiry, presented the final report and sought approval for its submission to Cabinet.

Councillor J A Hale detailed the aims of the inquiry, the evidence considered, and the conclusions and recommendations. He praised Panel Members and the Scrutiny Officer for their work.

The Committee debated the report and asked questions of Councillor J A Hale who responded accordingly.

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

- The importance of detailed analysis – to ensure that the information gained from data collected and messages give an accurate picture to inform service delivery, for example use of simple percentages do not take into account polarized views - certain groups of people having different opinions on a particular issue.
- The importance of evaluation – there must be evaluation mechanisms in place so that we can reflect on the value of engagement activities, what has worked, and what lesson can be learnt, This will provide more clarity about the impact of and outcomes from public engagement.
- The need to review Swansea Voices to ensure it is an effective consultation and engagement tool e.g. panel recruitment, social demographic make-up to ensure balanced representation, impact.

The Chair requested that the report be forwarded to the Local Service Board Scrutiny Panel for its information given linkages with the work of that Panel.

The Committee thanked the Panel for its work.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the report along with a covering report emphasising the Committee's discussions proceed to Cabinet; and
- b. the report be forwarded to the Local Service Board Scrutiny Panel for information.

68 **IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH SCRUTINY.**

The Scrutiny Manager presented the report which sought to propose how scrutiny can improve its communication and public engagement.

The Scrutiny Manager detailed the aim of proposals, for discussion, which included:

- Raising awareness of the work and impact of scrutiny (*Appendix A*);
- Include public contributions in the work of scrutiny; and
- Ensure that the voice of the public is heard within Council decision making.

He detailed the advice from the Council's Communications Team which included three proposals:

- Building communications planning into the work of the Committee, Panels and Working Groups;
- Focusing on and promoting a small number of 'significant stories; through a number of channels; and
- Councillor acting as communication champions.

The Scrutiny Manager referred to the communication checklist in *Appendix B*; an assessment of current practice using the national principles of public engagement detailed in *Appendix C*; and an "improving communication and public engagement' scrutiny action plan in *Appendix D*.

The Chair referred to the recommendations.

Members discussed the role of scrutiny; the meaningfulness of the various recent Council consultations with the public and how the use of the action plan would assist in this process. The chair stressed there was a responsibility on individuals to act on the proposals and apply some principles when deciding how to engage, feedback and evaluate at the end of the scrutiny process.

It was also suggested a briefing session for other councillors would be helpful to help embed engagement principles into our scrutiny process.

The chair also referred to and recognised an issue in respect of the need to raise awareness of the work being undertaken by the various informal scrutiny panels / working groups as these are not subject to the requirements of access to

information. He stated the consideration was being given to how information about this work can be made available to the public and better publicised.

RESOLVED that the action plan for improving communication and public engagement be approved.

69 **FUTURE CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSIONS.**

The Chair presented a report which detailed Cabinet Member changes and need to consider arrangements for future questioning sessions.

Members discussed the portfolios and approach to questioning sessions.

The chair stated that he would be meeting with the Leader to discuss scrutiny and cabinet member questions. It was suggested by the committee that the attendance of the Leader and Deputy Leader ahead of other cabinet members would be the best approach given the changes.

RESOLVED that a new schedule of Cabinet Member question sessions be drafted for agreement.

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

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Work Programme 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.

He referred to the recent publication of a report on issues around child sex exploitation in Rotherham and the importance that assurances are sought that nothing similar could happen in Swansea. He detailed the advice from the Head of Child and Family Services and suggested that the matter be referred to the Child and Family Services Performance Panel.

The Chair updated colleagues in respect of progress with public/councillor requests for scrutiny.

Members' examined forward look which identified future cabinet business.

A request for pre-decision scrutiny was made by Councillor A S C Colburn in respect of the proposed lease of Underhill Park to Mumbles Community Association. Councillor Colburn detailed his concerns in relation to the matter and Members applied the filtering criteria detailed at 7.5 of the report in determining whether to proceed.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The issue of child sexual exploitation be referred to the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel;

- b. The request at 6.1a of the report (to look at the policy adopted by Council regarding transport to faith schools and impact on budgets of schools facing possible increase in numbers) be referred to the Schools Performance Panel;
- c. The request at 6.1b of the report (relating to the handling of corporate complaints and procedures) be placed on hold pending with a request for further information; and
- d. The committee formally request that the upcoming Cabinet report on the Proposed Lease of Underhill Park to Mumbles Community Association be the subject of pre-decision scrutiny, and arrangements be made accordingly for the committee to meet to consider this.

71 **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.

It was noted that as a result of changes to Cabinet the following councillors are no longer able to participate in scrutiny:

- Robert Francis-Davies
- Jane Harris
- David Hopkins
- Clive Lloyd
- Jennifer Raynor
- Mark Thomas

Members noted the implications arising from the changes to Cabinet including the need to identify a new convener in place of Councillor J E C Harris for the Social Care at Home Inquiry Panel which is nearing completion. A new convener will also be required to be appointed in place of Councillor M Thomas for the Planning Services Working Group.

Replacement members for Councillors J E C Harris and M Thomas are required on the Scrutiny Programme Committee which will likely be confirmed at Council.

RESOLVED that:

- a. Councillor N J Davies be added to the membership of the Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Panel;
- b. Councillor P Downing be added to the membership of the Corporate Building and Property Services Scrutiny Working Group;
- c. The Social Care at Home Inquiry Panel identify a new convener at its next meeting
- d. The Planning Services Working Group identify a new convener at its next meeting
- e. Further expressions of interest be sought for the following:
 - Child & Family Services Performance Panel;
 - Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel;
 - Planning Services Working Group.

72 **SCRUTINY LETTERS:**

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

Members' discussed the timescales involved in providing responses by Cabinet Members.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the letters and action log be noted; and
- b. a request be made to amend the deadline for cabinet member responses to scrutiny letters to 20 days.

73 **SCRUTINY DISPATCHES - OCTOBER 2014.**

The Chair reported the draft Scrutiny Dispatches for agreement.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be agreed and submitted to Council on 4 November, 2014.

74 **ANNUAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE BULLETIN 2013-14. (FOR INFORMATION).**

The Chair presented the national performance report, which was the ninth annual bulletin published by Local Government Data Unit – Wales. The report contained information on the level and range of performance across Wales between 2013-14 on a number of service areas. It was explained that the report was being considered in detail by the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel but important for committee members to read to support and inform the scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED that the report **NOTED**.

75 **FUTURE TRENDS FOR SWANSEA. (FOR INFORMATION).**

The Chair presented a 'for information' report which offered an insight into current understanding of future trends likely to impact the planning and delivery of Council Services.

The committee understood the context, in terms of developing scrutiny and questioning around sustainability and long term thinking, however there was much interest in the data within the paper. Members also talked about the need to question cabinet members on this. The committee requested a more detailed discussion on the paper which had been produced by the Sustainable Development Unit.

RESOLVED that:

- a. relevant officers be requested to attend the next meeting to assist the committee in understanding / using the information and issues raised.
- b. The issue of sustainability and long term thinking should be a recurring theme for future Cabinet Member question sessions; and
- c. The Affordable Housing Scrutiny Inquiry Panel use the information on future housing demand within the document as part of the follow up of its work.

76 **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 meetings for 2014/15 Municipal Year were submitted for information.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm

CHAIR