

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC CENTRE ON MONDAY,
13 JULY 2015 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

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

Also Present:

B Madahar	-	Scrutiny Co-ordinator
W Parkin	-	Senior Lawyer

6 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P M Meara, G J Tanner, G Owens, and co-opted members Mr D Anderson-Thomas and Mrs S Joiner.

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

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

8 **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.

9 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee meetings held on 13 April, 2015, and 19 May, 2015, be agreed as correct records.

10 **ROLE OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE.**

The Chair presented a report to ensure understanding about the role of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. The role of the Programme Committee and Scrutiny Conveners was outlined. The terms of reference were attached as an appendix.

11 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION:**

a. **Leader of the Council (chair of Cabinet)**

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor Rob Stewart, Leader of the Council (chair of Cabinet).

The questions session focused on Councillor Stewart's role as Leader, in terms of priorities, actions, achievements and impact. A separate meeting has been planned for December to explore Councillor Stewart's specific Finance & Strategy portfolio responsibilities.

Councillor Stewart was invited to make any opening remarks before taking questions from the committee.

The question session led to discussion of the following:

- The current challenging financial position and projections
- Outcomes from recent inspections (Wales Audit Office, Estyn, CSSIW)
- Plans for a council housebuilding programme
- Anti-poverty work
- Major projects e.g. Tidal Lagoon, University expansions
- Development of the City Region and benefits
- Progress with the marketing of Civic Centre and St. David's sites
- Interface with the Local Health Board
- Local Service Board – opening meetings up to the public from July onwards
- Relationship between scrutiny and cabinet advisory committees and respective roles
- The scrutiny work programme and relationship between scrutiny and cabinet
- The Cabinet Forward Plan
- Leader's programme of visiting all wards
- Learning from elsewhere
- Challenges in the next 12 months (including financial, joint working ahead of formal local government reorganisation)
- Expectations for the year ahead (including progress on city centre development, continuation of rebuilding schools programme, completion of commissioning reviews, developments in housebuilding, creation of a more commercial council, innovation)

The Chair referred to a question submitted by a member of the public via Twitter which asked about "action being taken on crisis in elderly care, respite and emergency being moved out of county and the private sector overwhelmed". The Leader stated that he would provide a full response in writing however spoke about the council's transformation of adult social services and commitment of resources to supporting independent living. He talked about the value of newly appointed Local Area Coordinators as part of investment in prevention, as well as the collaborative working under the Western Bay Health & Social Care programme.

The Chair thanked the Leader for his attendance.

RESOLVED that the Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Leader, reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

12 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT: CORPORATE CULTURE**

Councillor Andrew Jones, Convenor of the Corporate Culture Scrutiny Inquiry Panel, presented the final report and sought approval for its submission to Cabinet. The inquiry looked at how the council can ensure that service delivery is always supported by a can do culture.

Councillor Andrew Jones detailed the aims of the inquiry, the evidence considered and the conclusions and recommendations. He highlighted the importance of staff inductions and getting feedback as well as tackling the blame culture. He also pointed to the enthusiasm and ambition of staff from the evidence gathered.

The Committee debated the report and asked questions of Councillor Andrew Jones who responded accordingly.

The Committee thanked the Panel for its work and agreed for the report to go forward.

RESOLVED that the report proceed to Cabinet.

13 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT – SERVICE IMPROVEMENT & FINANCE.**

The convener of the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel, Councillor Chris Holley, attended to provide a progress report on the work of the Panel and its impact, since the last update to the committee in February. Councillor Holley took over as convener in April and therefore recognised the work prior to this led by Councillor Mary Jones.

Councillor Holley referred to various meetings with Cabinet Members in order to discuss the implementation and impact of budget decisions within their portfolios. He also highlighted some of the issues arising from performance and financial monitoring. The Panel is also keeping a watching brief on future ICT provision and the authority's plans to bring services in-house.

RESOLVED that the report be **NOTED**.

14 **SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15.**

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Annual Report 2014-2015 for agreement. The purpose of the report was to:

- highlight the work carried out by scrutiny
- show how scrutiny has made a difference
- support continuous improvement for the scrutiny function

In particular the report contained a section on feedback and improvement and what we need to change. Taking into account the various improvement activities undertaken over the year, and feedback, the report presented a simplified set of improvement outcomes for the year ahead:

1. We need to talk more to cabinet members so that we can plan better and ensure that our work is making a difference
2. We need to align the work of scrutiny more closely to the five corporate priorities so that we can focus and impact on the things that matter.
3. We need more briefings and development sessions so that we have the knowledge and skills we need
4. We need more coverage in the media so that the public are more aware of our work
5. We need more members of the public contributing to scrutiny meetings so that we can reflect their views in our work
6. We need closer links with regulators and inspectors so that we can provide a more coordinated and effective challenge

Subject to agreement the annual report would be presented to Council on 23 July 2015.

RESOLVED that the report be **AGREED**.

15 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16.**

The chair's report invited the committee to consider the scrutiny work programme for the year ahead, taking into account feedback from the Scrutiny Work Planning Conference held on 8 June.

The report provided the committee with:

- The current work programme
- A plan for future committee meetings
- A progress report on the various existing Panels and Working Groups
- Papers and feedback from the Scrutiny Working Planning Conference

The work programme for 2015/26 included work carried over with because of its importance (e.g. Performance Panels) or because work is incomplete (e.g. Inquiry Panels and Working Groups).

The chair referred to the annual scrutiny work plan conference, which enabled all scrutiny councillors to participate in the identification of potential scrutiny topics, based on relevant advice and feedback from the annual scrutiny survey. This included the importance of looking at the right things e.g. by aligning the work of scrutiny with council priorities. The chair was also concerned that the work programme has appropriate coverage across all cabinet portfolios.

Taking into account feedback from the conference the committee was asked to consider what additional work should be included in the work programme and

method of scrutiny, e.g. potential future inquiry topics. Members considered whether there were any issues that merited referral to existing Performance Panels.

The committee discussed the key issues from the work planning conference and identified the follow as possible areas for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme:

- Building Sustainable Communities – work around this council priority
- Tackling Poverty – work around this council priority
- Procurement
- Corporate Building Services
- Transition from Child & Family Services to Adult Social Services
- Tethered Horses

Consideration was also given to information on future cabinet business provided, for any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the committee work plan be accepted; and
- b. draft proposals for new activities for the scrutiny work programme, based on the committee's discussion, be reported to the next meeting for agreement.

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

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

RESOLVED that:

- a. the following changes be agreed:
 - School Governance Inquiry Panel – remove Councillor Lesley Walton; and
 - Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel – appoint Councillor Chris Holley as Convener
- b. The Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services Working Group (pre-inquiry) identify an interim convener in place of Councillor Hazel Morris who is unlikely to be able to attend meetings for a significant period for health reasons.

17 **SCRUTINY LETTERS.**

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

The committee considered the contents of the letter from the Sustainability Working Group from the Convener, Councillor Anthony Colburn. The Group had held 2 meetings in order to look at current plans, activities and achievements with regard to sustainability and consider how this work is impacting on policies, service delivery

and planning, and whether the authority was planning for the longer term, taking into account specific future risks e.g. food security, climate change, energy supply.

Although the Working Group received information on a range of issues in relation to future trends it focused on a specific example of sustainability around food security. Following discussion the Working Group felt that this merited more in-depth scrutiny and identified a number of issues which could provide a focus for a future scrutiny inquiry.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the Scrutiny Letters Log be **NOTED**; and
- b. the issue of Sustainability and Food Security be included in a list of possible future inquiry topics.

18 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS:**

The Chair referred to the recent publication of the Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report (incorporating the Corporate Assessment Report 2014) for the City and County of Swansea. The work involved looking at the governance arrangements within the authority, including the scrutiny function.

Ahead of formal discussion at a meeting of Council, the report to the committee summarised what the audit report said about scrutiny. The committee remarked on the positive comments made in relation to scrutiny practice. It was noted that the report commented on the need to avoid duplication between the work of scrutiny and cabinet advisory committees. It also called for that the early involvement of scrutiny in financial planning, which the Auditor General felt to date has been limited.

19 **FOR INFORMATION: AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PLAN.**

RESOLVED that the Audit Committee Work Plan be **NOTED**.

20 **DATE AND TIME OF UPCOMING PANEL / WORKING GROUP MEETINGS:**

The date and time of upcoming Panel / Working Group meetings were provided for information to help increase the visibility of this work and encourage participation.

The meeting ended at 6.02 pm

CHAIR