

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2015 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

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

Also Present:

Councillor J A Raynor - Cabinet Member for Education
L Harvey - Chief Education Officer

Officers:

B Madahar - Scrutiny Co-ordinator
S Williams - Senior Lawyer
S Woon - Democratic Services Officer

50 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R A Clay, Mr D Anderson-Thomas and Mrs S Joiner.

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

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

Councillor D W Cole - personal - Minute No. 54 – Cabinet Member Question Session
Cabinet Member for Education - I represent a ward (Penyrheol) which abuts the Ward (Parc Y Werin) where a potential new school would be built.

52 **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.

53 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 14 September, 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

54 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION.**

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor J A Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education.

Members noted the short report on 'headlines' in relation to portfolio objectives which assisted the Committee in focusing on priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

The Chair advised that there had been a number of questions regarding the proposed new primary school in Gorseinon at Parc y Werin and the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) services. The Chair stated that a Cabinet report was expected shortly on the future of the EOTAS service and it had been agreed that the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel would undertake pre-decision scrutiny of this report and the proposed Cabinet decision. The questions received from members of the public would be forwarded to the Scrutiny panel who would consider how these could be dealt with.

In relation to questions regarding the proposed new primary school in Gorseinon at Parc y Werin, the following question was asked:

"Can the Cabinet Member advise the Committee on the current position with regard to the proposed new primary school in Gorseinon at Parc y Werin. It would be helpful if you could inform the Committee of the rationale for the project, options considered and how the public views have influenced the decision".

The Cabinet Member for Education read out from a response previously sent to the Parc y Werin committee (resident's group) addressing their concerns. The Cabinet Member for Education also responded to a question in relation to petitions submitted on this matter. With regard to a question on the display of statutory notices within the vicinity, she stated that she would liaise with Officers and provide a written response.

The Cabinet Member stated that all Councils were facing very challenging times. Whilst Education had received relative prioritisation as all council departments face large reductions in their budgets, this had still resulted in real-term cuts for many schools. It was noted that Swansea was the 14th highest of the 22 Welsh local authorities in terms of free school meals so the "expected" benchmark position would be 14th for most performance measures.

The Cabinet Member stated that Swansea was doing well in relation to national reading and numeracy tests. At Key Stage 4 the Summer term 2015 GCSE results were the best ever for Swansea. Additionally secondary school attendance was positive. However, concerns remained with regard to primary school attendance.

The Cabinet Member for Education, assisted by the Chief Education Officer, answered questions in relation to education inclusion and the development of new models of delivering services within schools in response to financial pressures. The

Chief Education Officer detailed the 10 areas which were currently being considered with a view to changing delivery of service.

Members discussed the impact of fines to increase levels of school attendance; the idea of staggering school term times and school hours, and safeguarding issues.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for attending.

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

55 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT: EDUCATION INCLUSION.**

Councillor C L Philpott, Convenor, presented the Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Final Report.

Councillor Philpott stated that the Inquiry Panel had found the topic to be complex and challenging at times.

She stated that some of the support for this group of young people, particularly by schools, was strong. However, it was felt that schools working at the coalface needed more support and assistance in working with those children who are at risk of being educated other than at school. A clear and active behaviour strategy was needed for the authority which details how schools would be supported to move forward in this area.

The secondary schools interviewed felt out of the loop in relation to any development in behaviour support and in Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) changes. The Panel, early in the inquiry, put a recommendation to the Cabinet Member which emphasised the importance of involving schools; recognising that they are a critical part of the service. The Inquiry Panel also emphasised the point that schools were showing many areas of good practice that could be shared with the Pupil Referral Units (PRU) and other schools. The Panel also found that there was a lack of communication between different parts of Education and felt that there was a need for a reflective journey to discuss their commonalities and communication links.

The Panel felt that by asking questions around this subject it had helped keep the spotlight and momentum on these services and on the needs of this group of young people. The Panel had hoped that this had helped to progress matters.

The changes to the PRU Management Committee were found to be positive by the Panel who believed that, in refreshing membership and refocussing the Committee, it was now in a much better position to drive forward improvements once the action plan was complete. The Panel were pleased to hear that a dedicated challenge advisor for the EOTAS service had been allocated.

Members discussed the report and key issues included:

- Concern regarding the length of time taken from the Estyn Inspection in 2013 to progress being made;

- Regret that the Panel report would not be considered by Cabinet prior to their decision to reconfigure the service;
- Concerns regarding consistency between schools;
- A number of schools were offering their own model in relation to Pathways and were keen to keep ownership within the school setting;
- Evidence of some schools did not have enough staff with appropriate expertise to deal with challenging pupils;
- The need to strengthen school governor training;

The Chair thanked the Convenor and Panel for their informative report.

RESOLVED that the report be **AGREED** for submission to Cabinet.

56 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - LOCAL SERVICE BOARD.**

The Chair presented an update on the work of the Local Service Board Scrutiny Performance Panel.

She referred to the short progress report provided and advised that the meeting planned for October with Sharon Miller and Nina Williams (AMBU) had now been deferred until December, 2015.

RESOLVED that the report be **NOTED**.

57 **SCRUTINY DISPATCHES - QUARTERLY IMPACT REPORT.**

The Chair introduced the draft of the quarterly report from the Committee to Council on the impact of scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the report be agreed and presented to Council.

58 **ANNUAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE BULLETIN 2014-15.**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the tenth annual bulletin published by the Local Government Data Unit – Wales. The report contained information on the level and range of performance across Wales between 2014-15 on a number of service areas.

He also highlighted the on-line resources provided by Data Unit Wales to enable members to keep abreast of performance.

It was noted that the Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Panel would be looking at this report in more detail to consider Swansea's performance.

RESOLVED that the report be **NOTED**.

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

The report of the Chair reviewed the scrutiny work programme.

The report provided the committee with:

- The current scrutiny work programme
- A plan for future committee meetings
- A progress report on the various existing Panels and Working Groups
- Cabinet forward plan for opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny

The Chair referred to how the scrutiny of Education through Regional Working (ERW) is developing. She informed the committee of a recent meeting for scrutiny councillors and officers from the six councils participating in ERW, which took place in September. Swansea was represented by Councillors F Gordon and C Philpott. It was agreed that a scrutiny councillors group would be set up in order to co-ordinate scrutiny work across the region and ensure a consistent approach. Swansea Scrutiny Team would provide the support for this group as the Council's contribution to ERW.

The Chair also referred to scrutiny improvement outcomes. Based on the discussion at the last committee meeting, ideas for actions for the committee to help deliver agreed outcomes were presented for agreement:

1. We need to talk more to Cabinet Members so that we can plan better and ensure that our work is making a difference:

To arrange a regular informal meeting with Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance to discuss cabinet business and interface with scrutiny.

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:

Establish new panels on Building Sustainable Communities and Tackling Poverty are being established.

3. We need more briefings and development sessions so that we have the knowledge and skills we need:

To arrange sessions on Council budget / financial scrutiny; scrutiny questioning skills; and effective scrutiny

4. We need more coverage in the media so that the public are more aware of our work:

To making 'Scrutiny Dispatches' quarterly report more newsworthy, and develop press releases from it.

5. We need more members of the public contributing to scrutiny meetings so that we can reflect their views in our work:

To develop further opportunities for public participation e.g. public speaking / question time, co-option.

6. We need closer links with regulators and inspectors so that we can provide a more coordinated and effective challenge:

To discuss with Wales Audit Office links between work plans, mutual awareness and use of audit / scrutiny findings.

RESOLVED that:

1. the committee work plan be accepted; and
2. the actions (outlined above) for the committee to deliver scrutiny improvement outcomes be agreed.

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

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

RESOLVED that the following changes be made:

1. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services Inquiry Panel – Councillor M H Jones be appointed as Convenor; and
2. Schools Performance Panel – Councillor M Evans be removed.

61 **SCRUTINY LETTERS:**

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

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Letters Log be **NOTED**.

62 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

The Chair stated that there had been no recent scrutiny events to report on.

63 **UPCOMING SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

The Chair referred:

- (a) National Assembly for Wales Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister, being held at National Waterfront Museum, Swansea on 16 October at 10.30 am; and
- (b) Childrens' Rights Scrutiny Training on 29 October, 2015 between 4.00 - 6.00 pm in the Guildhall, Swansea.

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

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

65 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 4.30 P.M. EXCEPT WHERE NOTED)**

The date and time of future Committee Meetings for the 2015/16 Municipal Year was noted.

66 **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 6.05 pm

CHAIR