



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 13 July 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided for Minute No's 15 – 17 and 20-25
Councillor Peter Jones (elected Chair Pro Tem) presided for Minute No. 19

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
H Lawson
G J Tanner

Councillor(s)
D W Helliwell
W G Lewis
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)
P K Jones
S Pritchard
T M White

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas A Roberts

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

P R Hood-Williams L R Jones
S M Jones J W Jones

Also Present

Councillor Mark Thomas Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management

Officer(s)

Bob Fenwick	Group Leader Highways Maintenance
Kate Jones	Democratic Services Officer
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader
Martin Nicholls	Director of Place
Debbie Smith	Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Mark Thomas	Group Leader Traffic & Highway Network Management

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): C E Lloyd
Councillor Co-opted Members: C A Holley

15 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 Peter Black – Minute No. 19 – Councillor Peter Black declared a personal and prejudicial interest and withdrew from the meeting for the item.

16 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.

17 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on the 15 June 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

18 Election of Chair Pro-Tem for Item 5 (Minute No. 19)

Resolved that Councillor Peter Jones be elected Chair Pro-Tem for Agenda item 5 (Minute Number 19).

Councillor P K Jones (Chair Pro-Tem) presided

19 Public Question Time.

Questions had been received from two members of the public, who were present to ask their questions, which related to agenda item six (minute no. 20).

Ms S Morgan, on behalf of residents of Green Close made a request to reinstate a crossing that had been taken away from the end of the road due to the ongoing construction of the cycle path on Mayals road. It was believed that safety and accessibility would be seriously compromised if a replacement is not put in place.

Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure, responded It was confirmed that a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit would be carried out following completion of the works and should any problems be identified further action would be considered.

Mr H Francis asked the following questions around the service provided by the Highways Department.

1. Figures published by the Council show that it has failed to achieve its own housing target in each of the last 10 years by a cumulative margin of approximately fifty per cent; Contractors and Developers believe that delays in highways is a significant contributor to this failure. To what extent do you think that the Highways Department can improve its service to address this shortcoming?
2. Do you think that the Highways department has sufficient resources available to discharge its statutory functions as well as support capital works such as Council regeneration projects?
3. Is there scope for further outsourcing of technical services to external consultants by Highways to help improve its service?

Councillor Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure, responded. It was acknowledged that on some developments specific

issues could arise, however it was not agreed that there was an overall problem with the service provided by the Highways Department and given the circumstances of the pandemic it was felt that the Department had coped extremely well. There was a discussion on the issue of resources, both the ability to fill qualified posts as well as staffing for changeable levels of work. It was confirmed that external resources (including outsourcing work) could and had been used where it was felt necessary.

Councillor P M Black (Chair) presided

20 Discussion on Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, supported by the Group Leader Highways Maintenance and the Group Leader Traffic & Highway Network Management, presented a report on Highways and Engineering, Infrastructure and Maintenance.

A verbal address was provided further to the written report circulated specifically highlighting the following:

- What work was covered by the Highway Maintenance Section and what they were responsible for
- Maintenance regimes and the maintenance budget – the 2021/22 budget for maintenance was £3.9 Million. An additional £1.4 Million had been allocated for the last 4 years following the commissioning report. Further funding had also been received from the Welsh Government.
- The current maintenance programme was for the period 2020-2025 – it was hoped that the programme would be completed 1 year ahead of schedule in 2024
- A Drainage Review had been carried out in 2020/21 – impact of increased heavy rainfall on the roads and highways infrastructure
- Work during the Pandemic – the service remained operational throughout and changes were made to the programme in order to continue work whilst also keeping both staff and the public safe e.g. avoidance of residential streets and bring forward work away from properties such as Loughor Bridge when traffic count was at a record low
- More resurfacing works had been carried out than in the previous year
- Future challenges and opportunities – flooding and ward boundary changes
- Risks

Questions and Discussions focussed on the following: -

- Sufficient / correct allocation of resources given there was a backlog of £70 Million of works
- Prioritisation of works
- Clarification of current figures for the backlog of works to make clear comparisons
- Challenges of climate change – increased flooding, effect of increasing temperatures on tarmac, impact of wetter / colder winters on highway surfaces as well as air pollution

- Measures to assist with the challenges of climate change – Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), Soakaways and planted areas
- Communication / co-ordination with utility companies on street works – increased signage and clarity on who was carrying out the works
- Inspection of street works following the completion of works – noted that a sample were tested for quality and compliance
- Highway maintenance, e.g. Issue raised following replacement of raised roundabouts with flat roundabouts – noted issues around cost of maintenance
- Trees overhanging highways / leaves falling into drains – limited powers available to enforce unless there was an obstruction to the highway
- Cyclist speeding on shared use paths
- Impact of 20 miles per hour (mph) speed limit being considered by the Welsh Government for residential areas – funding, signage and enforcement
- Gulley teams and available Gulley machines – noted that regular cleansing was only interrupted for reactive flooding
- Blocking of carrier drains – being looked at by the Investigation Team

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members and Officers.

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

21 Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report: Education (Councillor Lyndon Jones, Convener)

Councillor Lyndon Jones, Convener, presented the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel Update.

Further to the written report provided, he specifically highlighted three key areas of focus:

1. Schools sharing best practice
2. Support for children on free school meals
3. Readiness for the City Deal e.g. Swansea Skills Partnership

The Item on Harassment had been deferred and would be looked at in September, when more information was available.

In respect of the Education otherwise than at School (EOTAS) provision, the Panel had found that during the pandemic some children and young people were struggling to engage at school with their peers. The importance of rebuilding the relationship between pupils and schools, and not become excluded was remarked upon.

Thank Chair thanked Councillor Lyndon Jones for the update.

Resolved that the update be noted.

22 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

The Chair presented a report on the Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

The Committee noted the appointment of Performance Panel Conveners by respective Panels for the 2021/22 municipal year so far as follows:

- Child & Family Services - Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams re-appointed
- Adult Services - Councillor Susan Jones re-appointed
- Service Improvement & Finance – Councillor Chris Holley re-appointed
- Education – Councillor Lyndon Jones re-appointed
- Natural Environment – Councillor Peter Jones re-appointed
- Development & Regeneration – Councillor Jeff Jones re-appointed

Resolved that: -

- 1) Councillor Mike Durke be removed from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

23 Scrutiny Work Programme

The Chair presented a report on Scrutiny Work Programme.

He highlighted that the Procurement Scrutiny Inquiry had now re-commenced. It had reviewed and agreed terms of reference and key question for the inquiry. The Panel was now evidence gathering.

The next Scrutiny Programme Committee was scheduled for 17 August 2021. The main item scheduled was a discussion on the Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities listed below with the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism:

- Tourism, Destination Management and Marketing
- Business and City promotion

Resolved that the report be noted.

24 Scrutiny Letters.

The Chair presented a report on 'Scrutiny Letters' for information.

Resolved that the scrutiny letters log be noted.

25 Date and Time of Upcoming Panel / Working Group Meetings.

The dates and times of the upcoming Panel / Working Group meeting were **noted**.

The meeting ended at 5.25 pm

Chair