

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 April 2014

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2013/14

Purpose	This meeting is the last scheduled meeting for this committee in this council year. The purpose of this report is to help councillors take stock of the work done this year and reflect on the experience. The committee may also start thinking about what topics might be looked at by scrutiny in the new council year (i.e. following the Council AGM on 8 May)
Content	This report explains the background and purpose of the scrutiny work programme and includes a summary of the work completed this year. The work completed by the committee is attached together with a summary of the established Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups, some of which are still in progress.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluate the effectiveness of the scrutiny work programme• identify any topics that might be looked at by scrutiny in future• evaluate how well the committee has worked this year
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor Mike Day, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer(s)	Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee was set up by Council in October 2012, replacing the arrangements introduced in May 2012. These new arrangements have now been in place for eighteen months. Being the final scheduled meeting of this council year it is good practice to reflect on the last year's work and invite the committee to consider its effectiveness.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to help councillors take stock of the work done this year and reflect on the experience, and to start thinking about what topics might be looked at by scrutiny in the new council year (i.e. following the Council AGM on 8 May).

- 1.3 The Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing the council's scrutiny work programme, and managing the overall work of scrutiny to ensure that it is as effective as possible. A report was provided to each meeting to enable the committee to maintain an overview of all scrutiny activities (including the work undertaken by the informal Panels and Working Groups established), monitor progress, and coordinate work as necessary.
- 1.4 The broad aims of the scrutiny function have been to carry out a significant and constructive programme of activities that will:
- help improve services
 - provide an effective challenge to the executive
 - engage members in the development of policies, strategies and plans
 - engage the public
- 1.5 At the same time the committee has needed to ensure that the work of scrutiny is:
- manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available to support activities
 - relevant to corporate priorities and is focused on significant areas
 - adding value and having maximum impact
 - coordinated and avoids duplication

2. Scrutiny Arrangements

- 2.1 The arrangements agreed by Council in October 2012 aimed to achieve the following:
- all work to be managed by a single Scrutiny Programme Committee through a single work plan. This will ensure that work is cross cutting and not restricted to departmental silos.
 - specific work will be undertaken both through the committee and by establishing informal panels (for in-depth activities) or working groups.
 - the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee shall maintain overall responsibility for the work and timetable for scrutiny, and ensuring that the work is carried out, in conjunction with the committee itself.
 - all backbench councillors should have the opportunity to participate in scrutiny work regardless of committee membership.

3. Work Planning

- 3.1 A Scrutiny Work Planning Conference took place in May and was attended by 27 scrutiny councillors. At the conference scrutiny councillors shared views about the scrutiny work programme and identified priorities for the year ahead. The discussion was informed by views that had been gained from the annual councillor survey, cabinet

members, corporate management team, the public (via Swansea Voices Citizens Panel) staff and partners. Ideas suggested were also cross referenced with the priorities in Swansea's new Single Integrated Plan. Councillors were asked to prioritise a long list of ideas and the topics that gained most support were:

- *Street Scene* - to focus on road and footway inspection, maintenance and cleanliness.
- *Economic Development / Regeneration* – to focus on how well the authority is attracting inward investment into Swansea
- *Council's Engagement with the Public* - to focus on how well the council engages with the public (how do we communicate? how do we consult? what can we improve?), e.g. involving the public in decision making
- *Adult Social Services* – various issues
- *Planning Service* – various issues

3.2 Feedback from the conference was then considered by the chair and vice chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee to help inform proposals about any new panels / working groups, guided by the principal that the work of scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of scrutiny time. The chair and vice-chair also considered feedback from the Scrutiny Programme Committee's self-evaluation workshop held in April. Relevant to the work programme committee members felt that it was important the work of the Programme Committee should be prioritised and more focused, and that as much work should be delegated elsewhere.

3.3 A proposed work programme was discussed by the committee in June 2013 i.e. the topics that should be examined through various panels and working groups as well as a plan for future committee meetings. The work programme included work that was ongoing or already committed, either because of their importance or because work was incomplete, as well as new topics.

3.4 Non-executive councillors who are not members of the committee were given the opportunity to participate in panels and other informal task and finish groups. New scrutiny topics, once agreed, were advertised to all non executive councillors and expressions of interest sought. The membership of panels and working groups were then determined by the committee.

4. Methods of Working / Summary of Work Completed

4.1 The work of scrutiny this year has been carried out primarily in three ways – through the committee itself and by establishing informal panels (for in-depth activities) or one-off working groups.

4.1.1 Formal Committee Meetings

4.1.2 As well as developing and managing the overall work programme and keeping an oversight on all scrutiny activities, the committee has focussed on holding Cabinet Members to account by holding formal questioning sessions and providing challenge on a broad range of policy and service issues over the course of the year. This has resulted in the committee communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement through chair's letters to Cabinet Members. The terms of reference of the committee are attached as **Appendix 1**.

4.1.2 A copy of this year's completed work plan is attached as **Appendix 2**.

4.1.3 The work can be summarised as follows:

- Cabinet Member Questioning Sessions

The committee held all 10 Cabinet Members to account by holding a series of question sessions throughout the year. This has enabled the committee to explore their work, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

- Crime & Disorder Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Programme Committee is designated as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee under the Police & Justice Act 2006. The committee met with the then Chief Superintendent Julian Williams (South Wales Police) and current Chief Superintendent Jonathan Edwards and Reena Owen (Corporate Director – Environment) in their position as co-chairs of the Safer Swansea Partnership to:

- consider the outcome of a PACT review and Safer Swansea Partnership proposals for future community engagement, and give views
- discuss progress on Safer Swansea Partnership Performance with questioning on plans, performance, challenges

- Final Inquiry Reports

The following inquiries were completed this year. The committee formally agreed the final inquiry reports, produced by Panels, for submission to cabinet for decision:

- Tourism
- Services for Looked After Children
- Affordable Housing
- Public Transport
- Attainment & Wellbeing
- Economic Inactivity

- Chair's Letters - these are an established way for scrutiny to communicate views and recommendations directly to Cabinet Members, reflecting discussion at meetings. All scrutiny letters, whether produced by the committee, panels or working groups, and responses were published within the Scrutiny Programme Committee agenda.
- Scrutiny Dispatches – introduced this year the committee has produced a monthly summary of the headlines from the work of scrutiny which is shared with council and the public. However, discussion at Council has been curtailed by the Chairman instructing that the report is marked 'for information only – not for discussion'. The Council does therefore not have the opportunity of debating or discussing the work of scrutiny in the Council meeting. The Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee will write to the Leader and Chair of Council to ask if the status of the report can be re-considered.
- Pre-decision Scrutiny – The committee discussed the process for pre-decision scrutiny to ensure awareness and understanding. Aside from consideration of the draft budget by the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel there have been no other items subject to pre-decision scrutiny.
- Referrals from Council (or other bodies) – Gypsy & Traveller Site Provision – Review of Process

Following discussion by Council on 21 October 2013 the Scrutiny Programme was asked to carry out work to review the process to date in the search for a second gypsy and traveller site. The committee agreed to set up a number of special meetings in order to undertake this review, in order to check whether the process was robust, seek assurance on quality, identify any learning points, and recommend any changes for the future as appropriate. This work is underway with 3 meetings held to date and further evidence gathering to come.

- Other:
 - Welsh Government Annual Reporting on Local Authority Services Performance
 - Local Government Data Unit Wales Performance Report 2012-13
 - Welsh Government Consultation on Designated Persons
 - Estyn Report on Education Services for Children & Young People in Swansea

4.2.1 Informal Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups

4.2.2 A number of scrutiny panels were established, with conveners and members appointed by the committee, to carry out in-depth inquiries (sometimes referred to as reviews) or undertake in-depth monitoring of particular services. The use of panels ensured that scrutiny was both flexible and responsive to issues of concern:

- a) Inquiry Panels: to undertake discrete in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis. These would be significant topics where scrutiny can make a real difference. The committee's role has been to agree a brief for each of the inquiries and key question that is to be explored. Inquiry panels are expected to take no longer than six months to complete and would produce a final report at the end of the inquiry with conclusions and recommendations, informed by the evidence gathered.

The following new Inquiry Panels were established by the committee:

- Streetscene
- Inward investment
- Public Engagement
- Social Care at Home
- Education Inclusion

- b) Performance Panels: to provide in-depth monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas. Performance panels would be expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant cabinet members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, about services. Performance Panel conveners have also been required to provide the committee with regular progress reports on the work of their Panels.

The following Performance Panels have been established by the committee:

- Wellbeing (*this was previously known as the Child & Family Services but now has a wider remit to cover Adult Social Services*)
- Service Improvement & Finance (*previously known as Corporate Improvement & Budget*)
- Schools
- Local Service Board (multi-agency Panel) – *this is a new Panel established in October 2013*

4.2.3 Working Groups - Although the majority of scrutiny work would be carried out through the committee and panels, the committee also established some informal working groups of councillors. This supported flexible working where it had been agreed that a matter

should be carried out outside of the committee but did not necessitate the establishment of a Panel. This method of working was intended to be light-touch – effectively a one-off meeting to consider a specific report or information.

Working Group meetings took place during the last year to look at the following:

- Preparations for Welfare Reform
- School Meals
- Parks Service
- Planning Service
- Historic Buildings
- Social Housing

4.2.4 **Appendix 3a and 3b** provides a snapshot of progress with the informal panels and working groups that were established by the committee to carry out specific activities, and current position. A contact list for lead scrutiny members and officers is also contained in **Appendix 4**.

4.2.5 **Follow up of Previous Scrutiny Reviews / Inquiries** – the following previous scrutiny reviews were followed up during the year by the Wellbeing and Schools Performance Panels respectively:

- Support to Care Leavers
- Role of Teaching Assistants across the Primary Sector

5. **Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action**

5.1 In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Scrutiny Programme Committee has a protocol to deal with requests for scrutiny from individual councillors (who are not members of the committee) and/or members of the public.

5.2 Councillor calls for action (CCfA) specifically enable councillors to refer issues of local importance to an overview and scrutiny committee, however as a means of “last resort” in a broad sense, with issues being raised at a scrutiny committee after other avenues have been explored.

5.3 In accordance with these protocols, the chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee is required to consider any requests received and bring about a proposal about how to deal with these to the committee for consideration.

5.4 Over the year 1 public request was received and dealt with by the committee.

6. **Work Outstanding**

6.1 The following work may need to be carried over from the current work plan:

- Inquiry Panels
 - Inward Investment (*completion due: May*)
 - Public Engagement (*completion due: May*)
 - Streetscene (*completion due: June*)
 - Social Care at Home (*completion due: June*)
 - Education Inclusion (*note this inquiry is to be suspended pending outcome of departmental review into the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) service*)
- Follow up of Previous Scrutiny Inquiries
 - Support to Care Leavers
 - Tourism
 - Services for Looked After Children
 - Affordable Housing
 - Public Transport
 - Attainment & Wellbeing
 - Economic Inactivity
- Performance Panels
 - Wellbeing
 - Service Improvement & Finance
 - Schools
 - Local Service Board (*multi-agency Panel*)
- Working Groups
 - Local Flood Risk Management
 - Planning Service
 - Car Parking
- Other
 - Budget: to look the impact of financial pressures, asking questions about implementation of budget decisions and the implications on services i.e. questioning and challenge to cabinet members who will be responsible for delivering changes within their portfolios as a result of budget decisions, checking progress against the achievement of savings / intended changes and outcomes.

7. The Scrutiny Experience

- 7.1 As the committee reaches the conclusion of the year's work it is good practice to reflect on achievements and issues that have arisen. Committee members are asked to think of experiences both positive and negative and are encouraged to share their views on how process and practice can be improved.

- 7.2 The following questions are worth considering:
- What one thing has worked particularly well?
 - What has not worked so well?
 - What one thing could be improved about the committee?
 - What would help you develop as a scrutineer?
- 7.3 In January the committee arranged a self-evaluation workshop which also involved those councillors who have acted as conveners. Councillors worked in groups to reflect on the year so far and measure performance against a range of criteria for good scrutiny, thinking about scrutiny activities and issues relating to practice and effectiveness. As well as many positive reflections about current practice a number of issues were raised, relating to:
- Scrutiny work programme – e.g. tailoring approaches for specific issues, ensuring capacity to deal with important issues arising, managing workloads
 - Preparing for meetings – e.g. a consistent approach to developing questioning strategies, holding pre-meetings, training on questioning skills / techniques
 - Outcomes from scrutiny – e.g. holding post-meetings / debriefings to enable reflection on effectiveness of meetings and clarity of views about information / evidence gathered
 - Following up scrutiny recommendations – e.g. timely follow up and clarity about process, highlighting the impact / results of scrutiny to evidence difference made that can be shared widely
 - Public engagement – e.g. having a clear plan, raising awareness through range of methods, promoting the impact
- 7.4 A range of relevant statistics about scrutiny activity covering the last year is attached as **Appendix 5** to help the committee consider the performance of scrutiny.
- 7.5 The annual councillor scrutiny survey was also issued during March to all councillors. As well as gauging general perceptions and getting views to inform improvements to the way scrutiny works in the future the survey was also designed to capture councillor's ideas about what the scrutiny work programme should look like – these will be fed into the scrutiny work planning conference that will take place in May. 31 out of 52 non-executive councillors responded (approx 60%). The results of the survey are attached as **Appendix 6**.

8. Developing the Work Programme for 2014/15

- 8.1 A Work Planning Conference will take place in May to consider and identify priorities for scrutiny for the coming year. Some of these may be new but some of these may be activities that need to be carried over, either because of their importance or because work is incomplete. The Committee is invited to share ideas about any topics that might need to be looked at by scrutiny in future.

8.2 The first scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee in the new council year is expected to be 9 June 2014.

9. Scrutiny Annual Report

9.1 The key achievements from the scrutiny work carried out over the past year will be featured in the Scrutiny Annual Report which will be published in the next few months.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 Any costs that arise out of work plan activities, for example expenses for witnesses or transport costs, are not envisaged to be significant and will be contained within the existing Scrutiny Budget.

11. Legal Implications

11.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

Background papers: None

Date: 7 April 2014

Legal Officer: Nigel Havard

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Programme Committee Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: The Committee's Completed Work Plan 2013/14

Appendix 3a: Overall Scrutiny Work Programme Timetable 2013/14

Appendix 3b: Progress of Panels and Working Groups

Appendix 4: Scrutiny Councillor / Officer Leads

Appendix 5: Scrutiny Performance Data

Appendix 6: Annual Councillor Scrutiny Survey Results