

## Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 9 June 2014

### SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

<b>Purpose</b>	This report explains the background and purpose of the scrutiny work programme. The report invites the committee to consider the scrutiny work programme for the year ahead and presents proposals for agreement.
<b>Content</b>	A proposed work programme is attached which includes a plan for future committee meetings, as well as Panels and Working Groups.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• accept or make changes to the proposed scrutiny work programme, including the committee's work plan timetable</li><li>• plan for the committee meetings ahead</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Mike Day, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services
<b>Report Author</b>	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Coordinator Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: <a href="mailto:brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk">brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk</a>

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The broad aims of the scrutiny function are 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
- 1.3 At the same time the committee must 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. Methods of Working

2.1 The work of scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the committee itself and by establishing informal panels (for in-depth activities) or one-off working groups:

- **Formal committee meetings** – as well as managing the overall work programme, the committee will focus on holding Cabinet Members to account by holding formal questioning sessions, and provide challenge on specific themes over the course of the year - this may cover a broad range of policy and service issues. Matters considered at committee meetings will typically be ‘one-off’ opportunities for questions, which will result in the committee communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement through chairs letters to cabinet members, and where appropriate by producing reports.
- **Informal panels** – Scrutiny panels are established, with conveners 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 helps to ensure that scrutiny can be 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 will agree an ‘Inquiry Brief’ before establishing any Inquiry Panel, which will outline the aim and key question that is to be explored. Inquiry panels will produce a final report at the end of the inquiry with conclusions and recommendations, informed by the evidence gathered.
  - b) **Performance Panels**: to provide in-depth monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas. Performance panels are expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant cabinet members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, about services.
- **Informal working groups** – Although the majority of scrutiny work is carried out through the committee and panels, the committee can also establish informal working groups of councillors. This supports flexible working where it has been agreed that a matter should be carried out outside of the committee but does not necessitate the establishment of a Panel. This method of working is intended to be light-touch – effectively a one-off meeting to consider a specific

report or information, resulting in a letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s) with views and recommendations.

- 2.2 Non executive councillors who are not members of the committee have the opportunity to participate in panels and other informal task and finish groups. New panel topics, once agreed, are advertised to all non executive councillors and expressions of interest sought. The membership of panels and working groups is then determined by the committee. More than one political group should be represented on each panel / working groups. These bodies also need to be of a manageable size in terms of team working and effective questioning. A minimum of 3 members should be present at all meetings.

### 3. Work Planning

- 3.1 A Scrutiny Work Planning Conference took place on 12 May and was attended by 21 scrutiny councillors. At the conference councillors shared views about the scrutiny work programme and identified priorities for the year ahead. Councillors were asked to give thought to whether a particular topic merited in-depth inquiry, required monitoring, or could be dealt with through a 'one-off' discussion. As a starting point, suggestions that had been gathered from the annual councillor survey, cabinet members, officers, the public and partners were discussed. Ideas suggested were also cross referenced with the priorities in the One Swansea Plan (Swansea's Single Integrated Plan). A number of additional topics also emerged from the debate.

- 3.2 From the consultation the topics that gained most support were:

- Corporate Building & Property Services
- Governance of Schools
- Corporate Culture / Co-operative Council
- Sustainability
- Services for those with Learning Difficulties
- Target Areas
- Mental Health Services
- Obesity / Lifestyle
- School Readiness
- Roads / Roadworks / Highway Maintenance
- Young Carers
- Western Bay Health and Social Care Programme

- 3.3 Taking into account feedback from the conference, proposals for the scrutiny work programme are attached as **Appendix 1a**. The results from the prioritisation exercise at the conference are also attached as **Appendix 1b**. The programme is guided by the overriding principle that the work of scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of scrutiny time and resources.

- 3.4 This proposed work programme shows the topics that will be examined through various panels and working groups as well as a plan for future committee meetings. It includes work that is ongoing or already committed, either because of its importance or because work is incomplete, as well as new topics identified from the conference.
- 3.5 A work plan for committee meetings is also attached as **Appendix 2**, which includes a plan for Cabinet Member question sessions.
- 3.6 **Appendix 3** provides a summary of progress on current scrutiny activities.
- 3.7 For further information about the work of specific panels / groups a contact list of lead scrutiny members and officers is contained in **Appendix 4**.

#### **4. Monitoring the Work Programme**

- 4.1 A report will be provided to each meeting to enable the committee to maintain an overview of all scrutiny activities to ensure that the work programme is co-ordinated and effective. In particular the committee will monitor progress of work undertaken by the informal Panels and Working Groups and findings to ensure that this work is effective and has the required visibility. Performance Panel conveners will be asked to attend the committee on a regular basis to provide updates and enable discussion.
- 4.2 The committee's own work plan will remain under constant review to ensure it is robust and effective. An updated work plan timetable will assist forward planning and help the committee to manage workloads and review progress made. Members should always review and confirm items for the next and future meetings giving specific consideration to who should attend and confirm expectations so that meetings are always well planned and prepared for, e.g. information required and key questions that the committee wishes to ask. The committee will have the opportunity to introduce issues of concern and review priorities, as and when they arise.

#### **4. Support**

- 4.1 Each in-depth Panel will have the dedicated support of a member of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Unit. This lead scrutiny officer will project manage the work of the Panels and help to ensure that things runs smoothly, for example:
- Contact and arrange witness sessions
  - Carry out and assist with any consultation and public engagement exercises
  - Carry out research on behalf of the Board
  - Help to keep the work to time
  - Capture and reflect back the ideas, evidence gathered and any key issues that have been highlighted

- Assist in the compilation of final reports
- 4.2 The Executive Board and Service Departments are also an essential source of advice and support. Engagement with departments will be important in providing context for areas of work, knowledge about policies and service delivery, and technical expertise.
- 4.3 Prioritisation of scrutiny activities is vital in view of limited scrutiny time and resources. Aligning the amount of scrutiny with available resources will help to sharpen the focus on the quality of scrutiny and impact. The committee should recognise that a limited number of panels and working groups can be supported in any given year, keeping a degree of flexibility to adapt to issues that may emerge during the year.
- 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 agreed arrangements to deal with requests for scrutiny from individual councillors (who are not members of the committee) and/or members of the public.
- 5.2 Councillors who are not on the Scrutiny Programme Committee who have suggestions for scrutiny during the course of the year should make these known to the chair and vice-chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee for consideration. However for a more formal route there is the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA). CCfAs 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 the agree protocol for both councillor calls for action and public requests for scrutiny the chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee will consider any requests received and bring about proposals to deal with these to the committee for consideration.
- 6. Financial Implications**
- 6.1 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.
- 7. Legal Implications**
- 7.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

**Background papers:** None

Date: 28 May 2014

Legal Officer: Nigel Havard

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley

Appendices:

Appendix 1a: Proposed Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/14

Appendix 1b: Work Planning Conference Write Up

Appendix 2: The Committee Work Plan 2013/14

Appendix 3: Progress of Panels and Working Groups (incl Activity Timetable here)

Appendix 4: Scrutiny Councillor / Officer Leads