

## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 9 June 2014

#### IMPROVING THE IMPACT OF SCRUTINY

<b>Purpose</b>	To propose how scrutiny can improve its impact over the next 12 months.
<b>Content</b>	The report includes a definition of impact, approaches to improving impact and specific proposals for scrutiny councillors to adopt.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	Consider and endorse the proposals Act on the proposals that relate directly to their own roles within scrutiny
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Councillor Mike Day, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services
<b>Report Author</b>	Dave Mckenna, Scrutiny Manager Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: dave.mckenna@swansea.gov.uk

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 The current scrutiny arrangements were introduced in November 2012 and have since been successfully bedded in. Swansea's take on the single committee model has also been attracting interest from other councils in Wales.

1.2 While there is much to feel pleased about, and many examples of good work being done by scrutiny councillors in Swansea, there is nevertheless still room for improvement. At the Committee's evaluation workshop in January 2014 the following improvement themes were identified:

- Scrutiny work programme / management
- Quality of information and reports provided to scrutiny
- Outcomes from scrutiny
- Public engagement
- Follow up on previous comments / recommendations
- Preparing for meetings (e.g. developing questioning strategies)

1.3 While all of these issues will need to be addressed, the focus on outcomes seems the most appropriate to focus on given that the new arrangements have now had a chance to establish themselves. It is of

course important to ensure in any case that scrutiny is able to make the greatest possible difference. For this reason, over the next 12 months, the committee are asked to take 'impact' as an overarching theme for its work.

- 1.4 The rest of this report, therefore, will propose a series of actions that the committee, panel conveners and scrutiny councillors can take in order to improve the impact of scrutiny. These ideas were shared at the annual work planning conference last month. First, however, it is important to say something about what is meant by 'impact' in order to bring some structure to the discussion.

## 2. Defining Impact

- 2.1 The 'Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny', recently developed by the Wales Scrutiny Officers Network, define impact in the following four ways:

- Overview and scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers and service providers.
- Overview and scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.
- Decision makers give public account for themselves at overview and scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities
- Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes.

- 2.2 Each of these aspects can be considered in turn. For ease of reference an action plan table summarising all of the proposals detailed below is at **Appendix A**.

## 3. Approaches to Improving Impact

- 3.1 Broader approaches that can be use to measure and improve the impact of scrutiny include Results Based Accountability (RBA) and Return on Investment (ROI). While it is not the purpose of this report to consider these methods in detail they are nevertheless important to note. Members may wish to explore either / both as they might be applied to scrutiny as part of the work programme. Ideas from both methods have been used in this report.

- 3.2 *Results Based Accountability* has been described as 'a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that can be used to improve the quality of life in communities and also the performance of programmes and services'. It advocates the use of clear outcomes, measures and questions so has much in common with scrutiny. A Results Based Accountability Toolkit, designed for health professionals has been attached by way of background.

3.3 The term Return on Investment comes from commercial decision making and refers to the financial return on investment or the time taken to pay back the original investment. The Centre for Public Scrutiny have developed a model for applying these principles to in-depth scrutiny work. This approach, described in the attached Centre for Public Scrutiny publication, 'demonstrates that focusing on the 'return on investment' of scrutiny activity can revolutionise the way topics are chosen and outcomes of recommendations are measured'.

#### **4. Evidence Based Challenge of Decision Makers and Service Providers**

4.1 This aspect of impact is delivered through the four scrutiny performance panels and the Committee's ability to undertake pre decision scrutiny on Cabinet Reports before they are presented to Cabinet Meetings. Issues and concerns, as well as recommendations, are documented in scrutiny letters to the relevant Cabinet Member or to the Chair of the Local Service Board as appropriate. Impact can subsequently be seen in the written responses to scrutiny letters.

4.2 While the performance panels have been active, there have been very few examples of pre decision scrutiny. In fact there have been no examples over the last 12 months. In order to raise visibility of opportunities for pre decision scrutiny, therefore, it is proposed that content from the council's forward look document is included in the papers for this committee.

#### **5. Viable and Well Evidenced Solutions to Recognised Problems**

5.1 The main scrutiny mechanisms for suggesting solutions are the in-depth inquiry panels and one-off working groups. While six Inquiries have reported over the last 12 months, six working groups have met and made suggestions to Cabinet.

5.2 It is, however, the in-depth inquiries that provide the greatest opportunities for improving impact. While the inquiry 'method' is well established and tested over time, there are a number of ways in which impact could be improved at the different inquiry stages:

##### *5.2.1 Scoping*

- Establish Measurable Outcomes at the outset of inquiries: In line with Results Based Accountability, each inquiry should determine, if possible the population or performance indicator that the inquiry wants to influence. By identifying one measure it will help the inquiry to stay focused and to assess what its impact has been.
- Ask results based questions at the start of inquiries: Results Based Accountability provides simple questions that can be used to support the scrutiny of services (performance accountability) or the scrutiny

of strategic issues (population accountability). Each inquiry should consider whether to use these questions to structure their work.

- Determine the intended return on investment for each inquiry: Each inquiry should consider at the outset what they expect the impact to be in terms of its level of priority, its measurability, its potential influence and its likely value (see the attached Centre for Public Scrutiny report)
- Involve the right stakeholders in inquiries: Working out who needs to be involved at the start helps to ensure not only that a range of evidence is collected but also supports wider awareness and therefore impact.

### 5.2.2 Cabinet Response

- Ensure a constructive dialogue with Cabinet about inquiry reports: It is important that Cabinet Members have a clear understanding of an inquiry and the rationale behind any recommendations before they finalise their response. It is proposed therefore that panel conveners meet with the relevant Cabinet Members following the presentation of the report to cabinet to discuss the report and its implications
- Ask Cabinet what difference an inquiry has made: A new report template has been developed (**Appendix B**) that allows the Cabinet member to show, for agreed recommendations, what work is already going on and what will be new.

### 5.2.3 Follow up

- Widen follow-ups of inquiries to consider the wider impact: Follow-ups to in depth inquiries currently focus on the actions plans agreed by Cabinet in order to implement agreed recommendations. Instead inquiry panels could be reconvened to assess the wider impact of the inquiry process. This could include other stakeholders and consider; the value of the process itself; what has changed since the inquiry finished; and whether the inquiry made a difference. A revised follow up report template for Cabinet Members is attached at **Appendix C**.
- The following inquiries are due to be followed up during the next 12 months:

Inquiry	Cabinet Decision	Timescale for Follow Up
Services for Looked After Children	17 Sep 2013	June - Sep
Public Transport	12 Nov 2013	June - Nov
Affordable Housing	3 Dec 2013	June - Dec

Tourism	14 Jan 2014	June - Jan
Economic Inactivity	3 Jun 2014	Dec - Jun
Attainment & Wellbeing	1 Jul 2014	Jan - Jul

#### 5.2.4 Communication

- Communicate the impact of in-depth inquiries: It is important to ensure that in depth inquiries are visible to all those affected and that people know when scrutiny has made a difference. The intention is, therefore, to communicate at each stage of inquiries via press release and social media.

### 5. Decision Makers Give Public Account for their Portfolio Responsibilities

- 5.1 Cabinet Member Question and Answer sessions are a standing feature of Committee meetings and give Members the chance to hold Cabinet to account in public. One way in which the impact of these sessions could be improved would be to widen involvement in questions setting by councillors and the public.

### 6. Enables the 'Voice' of Local People and Communities

- 6.1 While public engagement remains an important element of scrutiny and has been used in particular for in-depth inquiries, there is clearly much more that could be done. One way to improve public engagement is through improved use of social media. The ongoing 'scrutiny bytes' project, reported previously to the committee is one avenue through which this can be done.

### 7. Next Steps

- 7.1 The proposals contained in this report have been summarised in the attached action plan for the Committee to consider and endorse (**Appendix A**).

### 8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

### 9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Background Papers: None

15<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Legal Officer: Nigel Havard  
Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley

## APPENDIX A: Improving the Impact of Scrutiny Action Plan

<b>What</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Who</b>
Improve the visibility of opportunities for pre decision scrutiny	Include Forward Look content in Scrutiny Programme Committee papers	Scrutiny Programme Committee
Establish measurable outcomes at the outset of inquiries	Include 'an indicator we want to change' in every scoping report	Inquiry Panel Conveners / Members
Ask results based questions at the start of inquiries	Discuss whether Results Based Accountability questions can be used for each inquiry at the scoping stage	Inquiry Panel Conveners / Members
Determine the intended return on investment for each inquiry	Consider using the return on investment method set out in 'Tipping the Scales' by Centre for Public Scrutiny for each inquiry at the scoping stage	Inquiry Panel Conveners / Members
Involve the right stakeholders in inquiries	Consider using the stakeholder wheel set out in 'Tipping the Scales' by Centre for Public Scrutiny for each inquiry at the scoping stage	Inquiry Panel Conveners / Members
Ensure a constructive dialogue with Cabinet about inquiry reports	Meet with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) to discuss the Cabinet Response before it is finalised	Inquiry Panel Conveners
Ask Cabinet what difference an inquiry has made	Provide revised 'follow up' report for Cabinet Member(s)	Inquiry Panel Conveners
Widen follow ups to inquiries to consider the wider impact	Reconvene inquiry panels to assess impact of inquiries and involve other stakeholders where appropriate	Inquiry Panel Conveners / Members
Communicate the impact of in-depth inquiries	Press releases, blog posts and social media to raise awareness at key stages in the inquiry process	Scrutiny Programme Committee / Conveners / Scrutiny Councillors
Widen involvement in questions setting by councillors and the public	Emails to councillors, blog posts and social media	Scrutiny Programme Committee
Improve public engagement through greater use of social media by scrutiny councillors	Scrutiny bytes project	Scrutiny Programme Committee / Scrutiny councillors using social media

Report of the Cabinet Member for XXXX

Cabinet - **Date of Meeting** (e.g. 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013)

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE XXXX INQUIRY PANEL – (insert title of report)

<b>Purpose:</b>	To outline a response to the scrutiny recommendations and to present an action plan for agreement.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None
<b>Reason for Decision:</b>	To comply with the requirements of the Council Constitution.
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal Services, Financial Services
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) The response as outlined in the report and related action plan be agreed.
<b>Report Author:</b>	
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The XXXX Inquiry report was submitted to Cabinet on the XX June XXXX after the XXX Scrutiny Inquiry Panel completed a detailed inquiry into XXXXX.
- 1.2 Having considered the contents of the scrutiny report, and specific recommendations made, advice to Cabinet on whether it should agree, or not agree, with each recommendation is detailed in this report.
- 1.3 Cabinet is also asked to consider, for each of the responses, any relevant policy commitments and any other relevant activity.

## 2.0 Response to Scrutiny Recommendations

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
(insert full text of recommendation here)
<b>Relevant Policy Commitments:</b> (list briefly)
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> (Briefly list relevant action taking place NOT as a consequence of the recommendation)
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> <i>Any actions already in train or proposed</i>
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> Any issues not covered above
Recommendation is <b>AGREED / NOT AGREED</b> ( <i>please delete as appropriate</i> )

*[repeat as required]*

## 3.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1

## 4.0 Legal Implications

4.1

## 5.0 Financial Implications

5.1

### Background Papers:

- 1. The list of background papers are to be numbered. If none, please state 'None'.*
- 2. Note that Background Papers must be retained for 6 years.*

### Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Cabinet Action Plan

Contact Officer:

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File Reference



**Report of the Cabinet Member for**

**Panel Name – Panel Date**

**IMPACT REPORT: SCRUTINY INQUIRY INTO .....**

<b>Purpose</b>	To help the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to assess the impact of their report into XXX
<b>Content</b>	This report deals with three questions related to the impact of the inquiry:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?</li> <li>2. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?</li> <li>3. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?</li> </ol>
<b>The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the contents of the report</li> <li>• Reach conclusions about the impact of the inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Cabinet Member for XXX, Councillor XXX
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	
<b>Report Author</b>	

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The xxxx Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook an in-depth inquiry between xxx and xxxx. This final report is attached at Appendix A. The Cabinet Member response and action plan are attached at Appendix B.

1.2 The reporting timeline of the inquiry is as follows:

Commenced	Xxx
Agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Committee	xxxx
Presented to Cabinet	Xxxx
Cabinet Response agreed	Xxxxx

1.3 The final stage of the scrutiny inquiry process is the follow up. It is at this point that the original panel reconvenes in order to assess the impact of the work.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to assist the panel as it seeks to answer the following three questions, each of which will be dealt with in detail below:

- What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?

- Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?
- What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?

## **2. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?**

2.1 [If applicable] The inquiry report highlighted the following as the key measure of impact:

[Outcome measure]

2.2 Since the inquiry concluded the following changes [to the measure] have taken place. [details of high level changes particularly as they affect the public / service users]

## **3. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?**

3.1 In responding to the inquiry an action plan was drawn up showing what steps would be taken to implement all of the scrutiny recommendations agreed by Cabinet (Appendix B).

3.2 The table at Appendix C [to be completed] shows progress against each recommendation and specifically:

- the Cabinet decision in respect of each recommendation
- the action taken / proposed to implement the recommendations
- the responsible officer(s)
- timescales involved

## **4. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?**

4.1 [In completing this section consideration should be given to whether, in the opinion of the Cabinet Member:

- The inquiry has raised the profile of the issue in question
- The inquiry has improved understanding / awareness
- The inquiry has provided useful research / evidence
- Any individual recommendations have had a particular impact
- There has been a positive impact from the implementation of the recommendations as a whole]

### **Background Papers:**

None.

Contact Officer:

Legal Officer:

Finance Officer:

Equality Officer: