

## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 7 July 2014

#### SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

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| <b>Purpose</b>                        | This report explains the background and purpose of the scrutiny work programme, and current position of all scrutiny activities. The report helps the committee to manage the work of scrutiny to ensure that the work programme is as effective as possible. The report also presents some proposals for agreement.   |
| <b>Content</b>                        | The scrutiny work programme is attached which refers to work currently active, showing progress with the established Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups. A work plan timetable for future committee meetings is also included.   |
| <b>Councillors are being asked to</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• accept or make changes to the committee's work plan timetable, and plan for the meetings ahead (<i>Appendix 1</i>)</li><li>• review progress of established Panels and Working Groups (<i>Appendix 2 &amp; 3</i>)</li><li>• identify a new topic for Inquiry</li><li>• agree proposals for future Working Groups</li></ul> |
| <b>Lead Councillor</b>                | Councillor Mike Day, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee   |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>                   | Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services   |
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#### 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

1.4 The scrutiny work 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.

## 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. The Committee Work Plan

3.1 An up-to-date work plan timetable for committee meetings, based on the agreed work plan, is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3.2 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. Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups

4.1 To facilitate monitoring of the overall scrutiny work programme **Appendix 2** provides a snapshot of the informal Panels and Working Groups that have been established by the committee.

4.2 **Appendix 3** provides a summary of progress with these current scrutiny activities.

- 4.3 For further information about the work of specific panels / groups a contact list of lead scrutiny members and officers is contained in **Appendix 4**.
- 4.4 At the last meeting the committee requested to see the Terms of Reference of the departmental review of Education Inclusion / EOTAS Service as the committee had agreed to suspend its Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to allow the departmental review to be concluded. The Chief Education Officer, Arwyn Thomas, has provided the Terms of Reference (**Appendix 5**). He has confirmed that it is anticipated that the departmental review will conclude towards the middle of July and that this has been discussed with the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel. It will be up to the committee to determine whether and when the Inquiry Panel should reconvene for a meeting in order to consider the findings from the departmental review and whether any future scrutiny activity is necessary. The original Scrutiny Inquiry Panel Brief agreed by the committee in November 2013 is also appended for information (**Appendix 6**).

## **5. Future Work Planning**

- 5.1 At the last meeting the committee considered feedback from the Scrutiny Work Planning Conference and discussed suggestions for future scrutiny topics and method of working in addition to existing activities.
- 5.2 The committee requested further information on the following proposed topics for Inquiry Panels to aid prioritisation and selection. In determining the topic the Committee should be specific about what it wants the inquiry panel to investigate and the intended impact of this work.

### a) Governance in Schools

Some work has already been done to develop a draft brief for this topic. Possible areas of focus include:

1. How can the effectiveness of school governance be improved?
2. How can Council support for school governors be improved?
3. How can we encourage more people to become school governors?
4. How can school governors improve public and pupil engagement?

### b) Corporate Culture / Cooperative Council

This topic will need further work however the following might be considered as a focus:

1. Should new models of corporate culture e.g. cooperative councils be applied in Swansea?
2. How can councillors positively influence culture?
3. How can changes to corporate culture help solve the challenges faced by the Council i.e. demand management, reduced resources and rising expectations?
4. How can we create an innovative approach across the Council?

c) Mental Health Services

The Council recently passed a motion supporting the Time to Change campaign that seeks to address mental health discrimination. An in depth inquiry could follow on from this namely:

1. What practical steps can the Council take to tackle mental health discrimination across Swansea?
2. How can the Council tackle mental health discrimination for its workers?
3. How does mental health discrimination affect Swansea?

Alternatively,

The effectiveness of the provision of mental health services to children and young people, especially with reducing resources and increased demand for CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services). An in depth inquiry could follow on from this namely:

1. How does the current provision of mental health services affect children and young people in Swansea?
2. What mental health services are on offer to children and young people in Swansea and how are they performing?
3. How effective is the multi-agency working in delivering such services, and, what can be done to improve that effectiveness?
4. What are the challenges for young people as they transition to adult service provision, and how effective is the support for young people in that process?

- 5.3 The committee agreed that all scrutiny activities must be focussed on the impact / difference they can make. It was acknowledged that a clear brief would need to be agreed and provided to Panels / Working Groups before they commence any work.
- 5.4 The committee is asked to agree the purpose of the proposed 'one-off' Working Groups identified before expressions of interest from scrutiny councillors are invited.

a) Corporate Building and Property Services

The relevant cabinet member / officer will be requested to provide a service briefing (what we do, why we do this, budget, performance, risk and challenges etc.) and assessment to enable scrutiny councillors to ask questions about the effectiveness of the whole service, and follow up specific issues already raised including cost of services / charges relating to schools and community centres.

b) Sustainability

The relevant cabinet member / officer will be requested to provide an assessment on current plans, priorities, activities and impact. This will enable scrutiny councillors to ask questions on how this work is impacting on policies, service delivery and planning, and consider whether the authority is planning longer term / being preventative / considering future generations. Councillors may wish to focus on specific future risks e.g. food security, climate change, energy supply.

c) Target Areas

The relevant cabinet member / officer will be requested to provide an assessment on progress with target areas work. This will enable scrutiny councillors to ask questions about achievements and the impact of the new approach.

d) Roads / Highway Maintenance

The relevant cabinet member / officer will be requested to provide a report covering service practices and procedures (e.g. dealing with pot holes), use of resources, prospects for improvement. This will enable scrutiny councillors to ask questions about the quality and effectiveness of highway maintenance and repair, and also issues relating to the relationship with utilities and strategic planning / co-ordination of works to minimise disruption to major access roads

e) Young Carers

The relevant cabinet member / officer will be requested to provide a report on young carers. This will enable scrutiny councillors to ask questions about the support available to young carers to minimise the impact on their personal development, education, employment and training.

- 5.5 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.

## **6. Monitoring the Work Programme**

- 6.1 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.

## **7. Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action**

- 7.1 None

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 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.

## **9. Legal Implications**

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

**Background papers:** None

Date: 26 June 2014

Legal Officer: Nigel Havard  
Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: The Committee Work Plan 2013/14
- Appendix 2: Scrutiny Activity Timetable
- Appendix 3: Progress of Panels and Working Groups
- Appendix 4: Scrutiny Councillor / Officer Leads
- Appendix 5: Departmental Review Terms of Reference - Review of provision to manage behaviour effectively and support young people to achieve
- Appendix 6: Original Education Inclusion Scrutiny Inquiry Panel Brief