

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 4 August 2014

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2014-15

Purpose	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.
Content	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. A draft Inquiry Panel brief is also attached for agreement.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• accept or make changes to the committee's work plan timetable, and plan for the meetings ahead (<i>Appendix 1</i>)• review progress of established Panels and Working Groups (<i>Appendix 2 & 3</i>)• approve the draft Inquiry Panel brief (<i>Appendix 5</i>)• consider response to a public request for scrutiny• consider the information about future cabinet business and any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny (<i>Appendix 7</i>)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Mike Day, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer	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 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 / working group 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 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**.

5. New Inquiry

- 5.1 At the last meeting the committee considered a number of new inquiry topics and possible focus.
- 5.2 Future inquiry topics were agreed as follows in the order of priority:

- a) Creating a Can Do Corporate Culture

An inquiry would look at the culture of the organisation and explore how changes can help tackle the challenges being faced e.g. demand management, reduced resources and rising expectations. It will enable scrutiny councillors to: consider the influences on organisational culture; and explore how the culture can be more focused on empowerment, personal; responsibility, innovation and collaboration. The expectation is that the panel will be looking at innovative approaches / models implemented elsewhere and drawing lessons that can be applied in Swansea.

A draft Inquiry Panel Brief is attached as **Appendix 5** for agreement to ensure clarity of purpose and intended impact of this work before any work commences.

Following agreement of Inquiry Brief expressions of interest will then be sought from all scrutiny councillors and reported back to enable the committee to agree convener and membership.

(NOTE: this is subject to any impact on the scrutiny work programme that may result from the discussion on the Wellbeing Performance Panel – Item 6)

- b) School Governance

An inquiry would look at how the effectiveness of school governance can be improved. It will enable scrutiny councillors to explore: the role and responsibility of governors; and issues relating to recruitment and the support they are given.

A draft Inquiry Panel Brief will be prepared for the committee's agreement before any work on this topic commences.

c) Mental Health Services

An inquiry would look at 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). It will enable scrutiny councillors to: find about the extent of the problem in Swansea and access to services; look at the effectiveness of multi-agency working in delivering such services; and consider what improvements could be made.

A draft Inquiry Panel Brief will be prepared for the committee's agreement before any work on this topic commences.

6. Monitoring the Work Programme

- 6.1 A report is 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 on key activities and impact.

7. Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action

7.1 Welsh Medium Education

- 7.1.1 A request from a member of the public was received on 30 June.
- 7.1.2 In accordance with agreed protocol, 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.
- 7.1.3 Taking into account relevant advice and views, the committee may choose to:
- a. include the matter in its work programme
 - b. refer the matter elsewhere
 - c. take no action
- 7.1.4 Correspondence from a member of the public was received by the Scrutiny Support Team which relates to the provision of Welsh medium primary school provision. The request is concerned about a lack of provision in Killay and the surrounding area and calls on scrutiny to highlight the issue, gather evidence about demand for Welsh medium

education in the area, and explore the potential for a new facility to help improve provision.

- 7.1.5 In his correspondence the member of the public stated that he had already written to the education department, local councillor and Assembly Member. Having sought advice it was confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills, Councillor Will Evans, was dealing with this and has now sent a reply, with copy supplied to the chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee (see **Appendix 6**).
- 7.1.6 Having considered the request and subsequent response provided by the Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills it is recommended that the committee take no action.

8. Pre-Decision Scrutiny

- 8.1 To facilitate the ability to undertake pre-decision scrutiny a forward look document showing future cabinet business is made available to scrutiny. An internal 'Forward Look' document is maintained by Democratic Services and covers reports to both Cabinet and Council. Attached as **Appendix 7** is an extract from this document showing upcoming cabinet decision reports.
- 8.2 This information is already made available to all scrutiny councillors on a weekly basis and any councillor can make a request for pre-decision scrutiny.
- 8.3 If further information is sought about the content that would help inform whether pre-decision scrutiny should be formally requested on a particular matter then this should be identified as soon as possible and will be referred to the relevant Cabinet Member for response.
- 8.4 If the committee identifies any particular matter for pre-decision scrutiny a discussion with the Cabinet Member will be necessary in order to consider timescales and window of opportunity for scrutiny involvement. This may necessitate a special committee meeting.
- 8.5 To ensure the best use of time and resources it is assumed that pre-decision scrutiny will take place on an exceptional basis - decisions that may have big significance, thinking about things like:
- strategic impact
 - public interest
 - significant financial implications

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 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.

10. Legal Implications

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

Background papers: None

Date: 24 July 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: Draft Inquiry Panel Brief
- Appendix 6: Letter from Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills
- Appendix 7: Forward Look (Cabinet Business)