

Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching purpose of the Panel is to ensure that the Council's budget, corporate and service improvement arrangements are effective and efficient.

On behalf of the Panel, the convener will write to the relevant Cabinet Members raising issues of concern, comments and recommendations as appropriate following Panel meetings.

2. Introduction

The Panel has a full work programme for the year and has so far held 8 meetings with a further 5 scheduled to take us up to the end of the municipal year.

3. Key Activities

The Panel is continuing with its usual work of regularly scrutinising quarterly performance and budget monitoring reports, which also include the Policy Commitment Tracker and Budget Savings Tracker. We have also received the Council's End of Year Finance and Performance reports. These have helped us to identify key areas that will require on-going or in-depth performance monitoring, either by this Panel or the other Performance Panels.

The Panel also identified some key areas where we wished to drill down further into performance. An example of this is the Flying Start Programme. The decision to look at Flying Start in more detail arose as part of the Panel's on-going performance monitoring. We noted from the End of Year Performance report that a number of the targets relating to this area had not been set due to new data gathering methods and we were also made aware of a number of risks identified with the expansion of the programme that were highlighted in Corporate Improvement Plan. Therefore a service briefing was requested to enable the Panel to understand the performance issues around the Programme in more detail.

The Panel has also initiated additional activities outside our standard meetings, including a visit to the Flying Start project in Mayhill and a development session on effective use of performance data with the Local Government Data Unit, which has been opened up to all scrutiny councillors.

The Panel has so far produced 7 Convener's letters to various Cabinet Members providing our views and comments on a range of performance and finance issues.

4. Achievements / Impact

We have increased our dialogue with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy, corresponding with him regularly. This has had the significant impact of providing increased opportunities for scrutiny involvement in the draft budget for 2015/16, including:

- Review of the Cabinet report and strategic programme – August 2014
- Review of engagement strategy – September 2014
- Consideration of the mid year budget statement – November 2014
- Consideration of engagement outcomes – December 2014
- Review of budget proposals – February 2015

Following our annual discussion of the Corporate Improvement Plan, it has been agreed that we will be consulted on the development of the draft of the new Corporate Improvement Plan, which will provide scrutiny with the opportunity to shape the future document, as opposed to making comments on a finalised version.

Our work on Flying Start led us to conclude that it is an extremely positive programme that is having a significant impact on the lives of children living in Swansea's more deprived communities. We plan to continue to monitor Flying Start performance through its quarterly and annual performance monitoring, however we are now able to do this with a much better understanding of the service and the issues it is tackling.

5. Future Work Programme

See attached work programme for full details.

The main focus for the Panel in the coming months will be scrutiny of the draft budget proposals. As outlined above, preparation work for this has commenced. We expect to receive the draft budget proposals in February and will be inviting the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy to discuss them with us.

The Panel will receive key service performance reports before the end of the year including: Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Information and the Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Performance Report. Both these sessions will involve meeting with the relevant Cabinet Members to discuss performance issues relating to these services.

The Panel is aiming to further increase its dialogue with Cabinet Members in line with the Scrutiny Programme Committee's previous instruction to hold question sessions with a range of Cabinet Members to monitor the implementation and impact of budget decisions within their portfolios. This work has been somewhat delayed due to the recent change of Cabinet Members. The Panel was due to meet with the Cabinet Member for Education at our November meeting but this had to be postponed due to ill health. Therefore, we plan to develop this aspect of our work in the new year.

There are a number of items that remain to be scheduled including:

- Draft of new Corporate Improvement Plan – To provide views and recommendations for its development
- ICT contract – To provide views on the future plans for the management of the Council's ICT arrangements post 2015.

6. Action required by the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None

**Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel
Work Plan – November 2014**

Date for Panel Meeting	Item to be discussed
Meeting 1 14th May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual work plan review To reflect on the year's work, achievements, experiences, issues, ideas for future scrutiny. • Work plan Development of work plan for 2014/15
Meeting 2 11th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Q&A session Cllr Rob Stewart • Budget Control and Monitoring 2014/15 Mike Hawes, Head of Finance & Performance
Meeting 3 16th July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Improvement Plan 2013-17 Richard Rowlands, Corporate Improvement Manager • Feedback from Centre for Public Scrutiny conference To inform Panel of the launch of a new publication – Raising the Stakes: financial scrutiny in challenging times (a guide for Welsh local authorities)
Meeting 4 20th August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future Strategy & Delivery Programme (reporting to Cabinet 29 July) Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr Rob Stewart Dean Taylor/Mike Hawes • End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 2013-14 (reporting to Cabinet on 29 July) Richard Rowlands, Corporate Improvement Manager
Meeting 5 17th September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Consultation Engagement Strategy (reporting to Cabinet 26 August) Lee Wenham, Head of Communications • Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement Report Steve Barry, Wales Audit Office • End of Year Financial Monitoring Report Mike Hawes, Head of Finance & Performance • 1st Quarter Budget Monitoring Report, including Budget Savings Tracker Mike Hawes, Head of Finance & Performance
Site Visit 7th October 10am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel to visit Seaview Flying Start Project Townhill To enable Panel Members to gather information on the purpose of Flying Start and hear first hand the experiences of staff working within the programme. This is in advance of a detailed service briefing on the Programme.
Meeting 6 15th October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Start briefing Briefing requested by Panel in order to look in detail at performance of Flying Start Programme Sian Bingham, Early Years Strategy Manager and Sharon Llewellyn, Flying Start Co-ordinator • 1st Quarter Performance Monitoring Report, including Policy Commitments Tracker (reporting to Cabinet 23 September) Richard Rowlands, Corporate Improvement Manager • Annual Review of Performance 2013-14 (reporting to Cabinet 23 September and Council on 7 October)

	<p>Richard Rowlands, Corporate Improvement Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Performance 2013-14 (Report Of Local Government Data Unit ~ Wales) Rosie Jackson, Scrutiny Officer
<p>Meeting 7 12th November</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-Year Budget Statement: Mike Hawes, Head of Finance & Delivery • Postponed due to illness: Q&A with Cllr Jennifer Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education: to discuss the implementation and impact of budget decisions within their portfolio.
<p>Training and Development – <i>arranged by Panel but all scrutiny Cllrs invited</i> 25th November</p>	<p>Development Session with Local Government Data Unit (LGDU):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of performance data in scrutiny and the Local Authority Performance Bulletin 2013-14. To ensure awareness of content of Local Government Data Unit Wales report and use to support the scrutiny of service performance. Richard Palmer, Head of Improvement, LGDU
<p>Meeting 8 4 December – <i>Note different day/time</i> <i>3.30pm-4.30pm. Additional meeting to accommodate Cabinet Member</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling and Landfill – Annual Performance Monitoring. To monitor and challenge performance and action plan for meeting statutory targets. Cllr Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation Ian Whetton, Waste Divisional Officer
<p>Meeting 9 10th December</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of Budget engagement outcomes Lee Wenham, Head of Communications & Customer Engagement Rhian Miller, Consultation Co-ordinator • 2nd Quarter Budget Monitoring Report, including Budget Savings Tracker Mike Hawes, Head of Finance & Performance • Welsh Public Library Standards – Annual Performance Report To monitor and challenge performance and action plan for meeting standards Cllr Robert Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration (<i>TBC</i>), Steve Hardman, Library Service Manager
<p>Meeting 10 14th January</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd Quarter Performance Monitoring Report, including Policy Commitments Tracker (reporting to Cabinet 16 December) Richard Rowlands, Corporate Improvement Manager • Identify a Cabinet Member to attend to monitor the implementation and impact of budget decisions.
<p>Meeting 11 11th February</p>	<p>Hold for budget scrutiny</p>
<p>Meeting 12 11th March</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Quarter Budget Monitoring Report, including Budget Savings Tracker Mike Hawes, Head of Finance & Performance • Identify a Cabinet Member to attend to monitor the implementation and impact of budget decisions.
<p>Meeting 13 15th April</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Quarter 2014-15 Performance Monitoring Report, including Policy Commitments Tracker (reporting to Cabinet 17 March) Richard Rowlands, Corporate Improvement Manager • Annual work plan review