

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 22 DECEMBER 2014 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor R V Smith (Vice Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
R A Clay	J P Curtice	J W Jones
A C S Colburn	P Downing	P M Meara
D W Cole	T J Hennegan	G J Tanner
A M Cook	M H Jones	
S E Crouch		

Officers:

N Havard	- Directorate Lawyer
D McKenna	- Scrutiny Manager
S Woon	- Democratic Services Officer

123 **USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEES**

The Vice Chair referred to the use of social media to promote the work of the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

He stated that photographs would be taken unless Members advised to the contrary.

Councillor A M Cook stated that she did not want photographs to be taken.

124 **ELECTION OF A CHAIR FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR
2014-2015**

RESOLVED that Councillor M H Jones be elected as Chair for the remainder of the 2014/2015.

COUNCILLOR M H JONES (CHAIR) PRESIDED.

The Committee wished to convey thanks to the previous Chair, Councillor A M Day and it was further **RESOLVED** that a letter of thanks be sent to him.

125 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N J Davies, Mr D Anderson-Thomas and Mrs S Joiner.

126 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL & PREJUDICIAL INTEREST**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interest was declared:

Councillor J W Jones – personal and prejudicial - Minute No. 124 – Election of Chair for the Remainder of the Municipal Year – married to Councillor M H Jones who may be nominated. Councillor J W Jones left prior consideration of this item.

127 **PROHIBITION OF WHIPPED VOTES AND DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

128 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 24 November, 2014, be agreed as a correct record.

129 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION**

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor Christine Richards, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Services to Children and Young People and Councillor Jennifer Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education.

Members' noted the short report on 'headlines' in relation to portfolio objectives which assisted the Committee in focusing on priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

The Chair asked a question of the Cabinet Member for Education in relation to the QEd 2020 Review, specifically that the Council found that "the key corporate risk particularly relevant to the Directorate, was for the local authority to continue to fail to gain the confidence of schools" and how the Cabinet Member intends tackling that issue?

Councillor Jennifer Raynor stated that since she became the Cabinet Member for Education she has had a number of meetings with Head-teachers of Primary and Secondary Schools and the response had been very positive. Many Head-teachers were already active members of a number of committees set up by the schools to liaise with the Council and were well aware of the changing financial situation.

She stated that alternative funding may need to be identified to continue the QEd 2020 programme and meetings were ongoing with head-teachers, governing bodies and Welsh Government. Due to the severity of current financial pressures QED programme phase B is under review and a decision will be made following consultation with heads, public and other stakeholders.

The Chair referred to a question from the public regarding the proposed sale of the Parklands School playing fields and read out the contents to the Committee.

The Cabinet Members' sought clarity on who specifically had proposed the question. The Cabinet Member for Education stated that she had received a number of emails

and letters from Parklands Action Group, some of whom were not residents of Swansea. There was also an issue regarding land being sold for social housing.

Councillor R A Clay expressed concern regarding the process of Cabinet Members not having sight of the questions beforehand and suggested that the questions be forwarded to the Cabinet Members for formal response at a later date.

The Chair advised that Officers were actively seeking public involvement in the scrutiny process by means of various social media including tweets publicising the work of Scrutiny and, out of courtesy, she was giving the Cabinet Members the opportunity to be made aware of the letters prior to a formal letter.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Services to Children and Young People stated that the QEd 2020 programme was long standing policy of the Council which had been started before the Labour Administration. The consultation process had been commenced with Governing Bodies asked to consult with staff and pupils in respect of UNCRC (United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child). Some schools had not participated in the training.

The Chair explained the process for engaging the public and referred to the second question from a member of the public regarding the identification of surplus school land.

The Cabinet Member for Education referred to the Council's requirement to achieve budget savings in excess of £25m over the following three year period. She detailed the situation in relation to the delegated schools budget and service level agreements. As a result the Council was looking at all assets to dispose which included Council owned land adjacent to schools. The Council had resolved that the Parklands land was surplus, however, not all land identified would be used.

The Cabinet Member for Education stated that Parklands School had an excess of land over many primary schools in Swansea and a report would be considered by Cabinet in the next few months.

In respect of concerns regarding childhood obesity, the Welsh Government had a series of initiatives to combat the growing issues of obesity. However, the issue was one that could not be resolved by schools alone and parents' contributions were required in dealing with the levels of obesity.

The Cabinet Member for Education detailed the reduction in Welsh Government funding and the impact this would have on the QEd 2020 programme. However, it was a priority to ensure that the money received from sale of school land would be used for the benefit of schools. She referred to Schools who had been generous in so far as selling school land for the benefit of other schools in order to provide excellent schools for all children across the City and County of Swansea.

The Cabinet Member for Education was asked about School Surplus Places and stated that, according to Welsh Government, the level is acceptable. Options such as federated schools may, however, have to be looked at but the Cabinet will be guided by heads teachers on this.

The Cabinet Member for Education was asked about Poor Performing Schools and stated that lots of good peer to peer work was being done by secondary schools. There was, however, a need to work with the primary schools.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Members for attending.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee write to both Cabinet Members reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee; and
- b. The letter(s) from the committee include the public questions received for formal response.

130 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT**

Councillor U C Clay, Convenor of the Social Care at Home Scrutiny Inquiry Panel, presented the final report and sought approval for its submission to Cabinet.

Councillor U C Clay thanked her predecessor, Councillor J E C Harris for her commitment and working in chairing the panel for almost a year until her promotion to Cabinet.

Councillor U C Clay detailed the aims of the inquiry, the evidence considered and the conclusions and recommendations.

The key issue arising from the review was the difficulty in obtaining information.

The Chair expressed concern regarding officer support for the scrutiny process.

The Committee thanked the Panel for its work.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the report proceed to Cabinet;
- b. the Chair write to the Chief Executive regarding officers' support for the scrutiny process.

131 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - SCHOOLS**
SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL

The Convenor of the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel presented the Panel Update (2) – December 2014 to the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

She advised that the panel currently meets on a monthly basis and the work completed since the last update in September included:

- a session with the Chief Education Officer and the new Hub Head of School Improvement around support for schools from challenge leaders and ensuring consistency of advice and guidance to schools.

- A meeting with the Chair of Governors and Headteacher of Morriston Comprehensive School to discuss their school improvement plan and discuss support provided by the School Improvement Service.
- Examination of pupil behaviour and how it affects school performance.
- Examination of the Annual Education Performance Data which included the Cabinet Member for Education and the Chief Education Officer.
- Updates in respect of individual school Estyn Inspections publications and any advisory/practice documents including for example: relevant Estyn Inspection outcomes for Swansea, Estyn and other guidance information.

Councillor F M Gordon referred to achievements/impact which included:

- The Panel recommended that the information on the United Nations Rights of the Child be included in the guidance given to home educators. The leaflet given to parents/carers who educate their children at home has now been amended to include this information.
- The Panel have been (and will be) following up on a number of issues that have been highlighted by schools in recent meetings:
 - i. The issue of children being put on a school roll but never actually attending that school because they are on an educated other than at school pathway. Some schools are concerned that these children are on their roll but they have control over their outcomes or attendance. That in turn affects their performance figures.
 - ii. Recruitment of and dealing with competency issues in relation to teaching staff.
 - iii. The Special Educational Needs budget formula and its allocation to schools.

The Panel will meet with a further two schools in January and March and will speak to the Head-teacher and Chair of Governors of each school. Prior to each of these sessions they will meet the appropriate Challenge Leader. Schools were chosen based on the outcomes identified in Regional Support, Challenge and Intervention Framework (RSCIF).

A discussion ensued regarding:

- Data sharing, specifically in relation to children who are educated other than at school;
- Relations and scrutiny arrangements between the Council and the ERW Regional Consortium; and
- Timescales for completion of the Ethnic Minority Learning & Achievement Service (EMLAS) review.

The Chair thanked the Councillor F M Gordon for the updated.

RESOLVED to ask when the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and EMLAS reviews would be completed as part of the letter to the Cabinet member.

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2014-2015. The report explained the background and purpose of the Scrutiny Work Programme and the current position of all scrutiny activities. The Work Programme referred to the work currently active, showing progress and the established Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups. The Work Plan timetable for future Committee meetings was also provided.

The Chair updated colleagues in respect of meetings recently undertaken with the Chair's of Audit and Democratic Services Committee in relation to developing the relationship in order for mutual awareness and understanding of the work of scrutiny and Democratic Services Committee; respective work plans to be co-ordinated and avoid duplication/gaps; and establishment of clear mechanisms for referral of issues, if necessary.

Members' discussed items for future scrutiny (including the manner in which civic events are organised) and the work plan.

RESOLVED that:

- a. A Working Group be established to examine the manner in which Civic Events are organised

133 **MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS**

The Chair presented a report which advised of changes required to the membership of the various Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

RESOLVED that:

- a. **Schools Performance Scrutiny Panel** - Remove Councillor P M Matthews.
- b. **Transformation of Adult Social Services Panel** – Remove Councillor A M Cook. Add Councillor R A Clay.
- c. **School Governance – Remove Councillor A M Day**
- d. **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services** – expressions of interest are still invited.

134 **SCRUTINY LETTERS**

The Chair reported the updated Scrutiny Letters Log.

RESOLVED that a working group on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard should be established, following request from the Affordable Housing Scrutiny Inquiry Panel.

135 **SCRUTINY DISPATCHES - IMPACT REPORT**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager presented a draft of the first of a quarterly series of reports from the Committee to Council on the impact of Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be agreed and submitted to Council on 3 February, 2015.

136 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2014/15
MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 4.30 P.M. EXCEPT WHERE NOTED)**

The dates and times of future meetings for 2014/15 Municipal Year were submitted for information.

137 **DATE AND TIME OF UPCOMING PANEL / WORKING GROUP MEETINGS**

The date and time of upcoming Panel/Working Groups meetings were submitted for information.

The meeting ended at 6.10 pm.

CHAIR