

## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 13 April 2015

#### ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2014/15

<b>Purpose</b>	This meeting is the last scheduled meeting of the committee in this council year. The purpose of this report is to help councillors take stock of the work done this year and reflect on the experience. The committee may also start thinking about what topics might be looked at by scrutiny in the new council year (i.e. following the Council AGM on 19 May)
<b>Content</b>	This report explains the background and purpose of the scrutiny work programme and includes a summary of the work completed this year. The work completed by the committee is attached together with a summary of the established Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups, some of which are still in progress.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• evaluate the effectiveness of the scrutiny work programme</li><li>• identify any topics that might be looked at by scrutiny in future</li><li>• evaluate how well the committee has worked this year</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services
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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Being the final scheduled meeting of this council year it is good practice to look back on the last year's work and invite the committee to consider its effectiveness. The purpose of this report is to help councillors take stock of the work done this year and reflect on the experience, and to start thinking about what topics might be looked at by scrutiny in the new council year.
- 1.2 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. A report was provided to each meeting to enable the committee to maintain an overview of all scrutiny activities (including the work undertaken by the

informal Panels and Working Groups established), monitor progress, and coordinate work as necessary.

## **2. Scrutiny Arrangements**

2.1 The broad aim of the scrutiny function has been:

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

2.2 The council's scrutiny arrangements agreed by Council in October 2012 aimed to achieve the following:

- all work to be managed by a single Scrutiny Programme Committee through a single work plan. This will ensure that work is cross cutting and not restricted to departmental silos.
- specific work will be undertaken both through the committee and by establishing informal panels (for in-depth activities) or working groups.
- the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee shall maintain overall responsibility for the work and timetable for scrutiny, and ensuring that the work is carried out, in conjunction with the committee itself.
- all backbench councillors should have the opportunity to participate in scrutiny work regardless of committee membership.

2.3 The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Programme Committee are attached as **Appendix 1**.

## **3. Work Planning**

3.1 The committee has needed to 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

3.2 A Scrutiny Work Planning Conference took place in May and was attended by 21 scrutiny councillors. At the conference scrutiny councillors shared views about the scrutiny work programme and identified priorities for the year ahead. The discussion was informed by views that had been gained from the annual councillor survey, cabinet members, executive board, the public (via Swansea Voices Citizens

Panel) staff and partners. Ideas suggested were also cross referenced with the priorities in Swansea's Single Integrated Plan.

3.3 Councillors were asked to prioritise a long list of ideas, considering both topics and the suitable approach e.g. inquiries, performance monitoring or one-off working groups. From the consultation the topics that gained most support were:

- Corporate Building & Property Services
- Governance of Schools
- Corporate Culture / Co-operative Council
- Sustainability
- Services for those with Learning Difficulties
- Target Areas
- Mental Health Services
- Obesity / Lifestyle
- School Readiness
- Roads / Roadworks / Highway Maintenance
- Young Carers
- Western Bay Health and Social Care Programme

3.4 Feedback from the conference was then considered by the chair and vice chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee to help inform proposals about any new panels / working groups, guided by the principal that the work of scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of scrutiny time.

3.5 A proposed work programme was discussed by the committee in June 2014 i.e. the topics that should be examined through various panels and working groups as well as a plan for future committee meetings. The work programme included work that was ongoing or already committed, either because of its importance or because work was incomplete, as well as new topics. Further information was considered over subsequent meetings in order to prioritise potential inquiries and working groups.

3.6 Non-executive councillors who are not members of the committee were given the opportunity to participate in panels and other informal task and finish groups. New scrutiny topics, once agreed, were advertised to all non executive councillors and expressions of interest sought. The membership of panels and working groups were then determined by the committee.

#### **4. Summary of Work Completed**

4.1 The work of scrutiny this year has been carried out primarily in three ways – through the committee itself and by establishing informal panels (for in-depth activities) or one-off working groups.

#### 4.1.1 Formal Committee Meetings

4.1.2 As well as developing and managing the overall work programme and keeping an oversight on all scrutiny activities, the committee has focussed on holding Cabinet Members to account by holding formal questioning sessions and providing challenge on a broad range of policy and service issues over the course of the year. This has resulted in the committee communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement through chair's letters to Cabinet Members. A copy of this year's completed work plan is attached as **Appendix 2**.

4.1.3 The work can be summarised as follows:

- Cabinet Member Questioning Sessions

The committee held all 10 Cabinet Members to account by holding a series of question sessions throughout the year. This has enabled the committee to explore their work, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

- Crime & Disorder Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Programme Committee is designated as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee under the Police & Justice Act 2006. The committee met with Chief Superintendent Phil Davies (South Wales Police) and Chris Sivers (Director – People) in their position as co-chairs of the Safer Swansea Partnership to discuss progress on Safer Swansea Partnership Performance with questioning on plans, performance, challenges.

- Final Inquiry Reports

The following inquiries were completed over the last year. The committee formally agreed the final inquiry reports, produced by Panels, for submission to cabinet for decision:

Inquiry	Report to Cabinet	Cabinet Decision	Recommendations		
			Agreed	Partly	Rejected
Inward investment	26 Aug 2014	20 Jan 2015	10	0	2
Public Engagement	21 Oct 2014	17 Feb 2015	15	1	0
Streetscene	16 Dec 2014	expected 14 Apr 2014			
Social Care at Home	20 Jan 2015	awaited			

- Chair's Letters - these are an established way for scrutiny to communicate views and recommendations directly to Cabinet Members, reflecting discussion at meetings. All scrutiny letters,

whether produced by the committee, panels or working groups, and responses were published within the Scrutiny Programme Committee agenda.

- Scrutiny Dispatches – the committee produced a monthly summary of the headlines from the work of scrutiny for council and the public. In November 2014 it was agreed by council that future reports should be made on a quarterly basis allowing for full discussion. The committee agreed that this new report should focus on impact and how scrutiny is making a difference, rather than a descriptive account of scrutiny activities. The first of the quarterly reports was presented to 3 March Council.
- Pre-decision Scrutiny – 2 cabinet reports were subject to pre-decision scrutiny:
  - Proposed Lease of Underhill Park to Mumbles Community Association – Report of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing & Healthy City to Cabinet 18 November 2014
  - Everyone's IT - The Move to an In-house Managed ICT Service – Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Strategy to Cabinet 16 December 2014 (*this was delegated to the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel to undertake*)
- Referrals from Council (or other bodies) – Gypsy & Traveller Site Provision – Review of Process

Following referral from Council the committee agreed to undertake this review by setting up a number of special meetings, in order to check whether the process was robust, seek assurance on quality, identify any learning points, and recommend any changes for the future as appropriate. This work commenced in February 2014 and 11 meetings have been held to date, with the review nearing the conclusion of evidence gathering.

- Other Reports:
  - Swansea Children's Rights Scheme
  - Annual Local Government Performance Bulletin 2013-14
  - Future Trends for Swansea
  - Wales Audit Office Report: Good Scrutiny? Good Question!

#### **4.2.1 Informal Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups**

4.2.2 A number of scrutiny panels were established, with conveners and members 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 ensured that scrutiny was both 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. Inquiry panels are expected to take no longer than six months to complete and would produce a final report at the end of the inquiry with conclusions and recommendations for Cabinet (and other decision-makers), informed by the evidence gathered.

The following new Inquiry Panels were established by the committee:

- Corporate Culture
- School Governance
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Education Inclusion (*whilst originally set up in early 2014 the Panel was suspended pending the outcome of a departmental review of the Education Other Than At School Service. Having considered the findings and proposed actions from that review the Panel agreed that an inquiry was still necessary and have recently commenced evidence gathering*)

A key change was introduced during the year – to establish a pre-inquiry working group at the start of any proposed inquiry - councillors involved being responsible for determining whether an inquiry is necessary and suggesting appropriate terms of reference to the committee for agreement. This would be based on a detailed presentation of the subject matter with advice from relevant cabinet members / officers and provision of existing research and information to inform the focus of any inquiry.

**Follow up of Previous Scrutiny Inquiries** – Inquiry Panels reconvene to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and cabinet action plans, and the impact of their work. A meeting will usually be held 6-12 months following cabinet decision, with a further follow up arranged if required. The following previous scrutiny inquiries were followed up during the year:

<b>Inquiry</b>	<b>Status</b>
Services for Looked After Children	Further follow up required
Support to Care Leavers <i>(dealt with by the Child &amp; Family Services Performance Panel)</i>	Further follow up required
Public Transport	Further follow up required (meeting arranged 20 April)
Tourism	Complete
Affordable Housing	Complete
Attainment & Wellbeing	First follow up arranged for 30 April

- b) Performance Panels: to provide in-depth monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas. Performance Panels would be expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant cabinet members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, about services. Performance Panel conveners have also been required to provide the committee with regular progress reports on the work of their Panels.

The following Performance Panels have been established by the committee:

- Service Improvement & Finance
- Schools
- Child & Family Services (*the committee decided during the year to split the work of the former Wellbeing Performance Panel to re-establish a Child & Family Services Performance Panel and a separate Panel with a specific remit to focus on the Transformation of Adult Social Services*)
- Local Service Board (*multi-agency Panel*)

4.2.3 Working Groups - Although the majority of scrutiny work would be carried out through the committee and panels, the committee also established some informal working groups of councillors. This supported flexible working where it had been agreed that a matter should be carried out outside of the committee but did not necessitate the establishment of a Panel. This method of working was intended to be light-touch – effectively a one-off meeting to consider a specific report or information, resulting in a letter to the relevant Cabinet Member(s) with views and recommendations.

Working Group meetings took place during the last year to look at the following:

- Planning Services
- Car Parking
- Corporate Building & Property Services
- Local Flood Risk Management
- Sustainability

4.2.4 **Appendix 3a and 3b** provides a snapshot of progress with the informal panels and working groups that were established by the committee to carry out specific activities, and current position. A contact list for lead scrutiny members and officers is also contained in **Appendix 4**.

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

5.1 In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Scrutiny Programme Committee has a protocol to deal with requests for scrutiny from individual councillors (who are not members of the committee) and/or members of the public.

- 5.2 Also, councillor calls for action (CCfA) specifically enable councillors to refer issues of local importance to an overview and scrutiny committee, however as a means of “last resort” in a broad sense, with issues being raised at a scrutiny committee after other avenues have been explored.
- 5.3 In accordance with these protocols, 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.
- 5.4 Over the year 3 public requests was received and dealt with by the committee. These related to Welsh medium primary school provision in Swansea West, children’s rights impact assessment in relation to school land sales, and the proposed sale of land at Parkland Primary School.
- 5.5 Since the last committee meeting a further request for scrutiny has been made. It relates to concerns about the application process for the Blue Badge Scheme. Advice is being sought to ensure the committee can make an informed decision and can deal with this public request appropriately. This will be reported to the committee for consideration.

## 6. **The Scrutiny Experience**

- 6.1 As the committee reaches the conclusion of the year’s work it is good practice to reflect on achievements and issues that have arisen. Committee members are encouraged to share their views on how process and practice can be improved, thinking of experiences both positive and negative.
- 6.2 The following questions may be worth considering:
- What one thing has worked particularly well?
  - What has not worked so well?
  - What one thing could be improved about the committee?
  - What would help you develop as a scrutineer?
- 6.3 A range of relevant statistics about scrutiny activity covering the last year is attached as **Appendix 5** to help the committee consider the performance of scrutiny. Amongst the information provided this shows the average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings currently as 72%. This compares with 60% during 2013/14.
- 6.4 The annual councillor scrutiny survey was also issued during February and March to all councillors. As well as gauging general perceptions and getting views to inform improvements to the way scrutiny works in the future the survey was also designed to capture councillor’s ideas about what the scrutiny work programme should look like – these will be fed into the scrutiny work planning conference that will take place in May. 23 survey responses have been received to date. This includes 18 out of the 62 non-executive councillors (approx 29%). The results of the survey so far are attached as **Appendix 6**. The survey will be kept



open to get as much feedback as possible for the work planning conference and also because the results will be captured in the Scrutiny Annual Report which will be drafted in the next few months. This will also include results from the staff, partner and public survey which is currently running until 1 May.

## **7. Improving Scrutiny**

7.1 Over the course of the year scrutiny councillors and officers have been involved in development and improvement events in order to support and deliver effective scrutiny. This included attendance at scrutiny events at a regional and national level, such as those organised by the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny. The various improvement activities can be summarised as follows:

7.2 Improving the Impact of Scrutiny:

In June 2014 the committee agreed proposals for how scrutiny can improve its impact over the next 12 months. An action plan was agreed which focused on the different inquiry stages (scoping, reporting, and follow up), given that inquiries provided the greatest opportunities for impact. It also included the proposal that the content for the Council's forward look document be included in the papers for Scrutiny Committee to consider opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny.

Some achievements:

- Pre-decision scrutiny – clear process exists, managed by the committee with improved visibility of opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny. Positive feedback from scrutiny members and cabinet members.
- Establishing measurable outcomes at the outset of inquiries where possible – identifying the 'indicators we want to change'.
- There is a process for involving the right stakeholders in inquiries – stakeholder mapping.
- New approach agreed to ensure constructive dialogue with Cabinet about inquiry reports – meeting with relevant Cabinet Members to discuss cabinet response before it is finalised.
- Introduced revised 'follow up' report for Cabinet Members asking what difference an inquiry has made and considering the wider impact by involving stakeholders in the follow up process.
- Impact of in-depth scrutiny is communicated via press releases, blog posts and social media, includes raising awareness at key stages in the inquiry process.

7.3 Improving Communication & Public Engagement with Scrutiny

In September 2014 the committee approved an action plan for improving communication and public engagement, which aimed to:

- Raise awareness of the work and impact of scrutiny
- Include public contributions in the work of scrutiny; and

- Ensure that the voice of the public is heard within Council decision making.

The following proposals were endorsed:

- Building communications planning into the work of the Committee, Panels and Working Groups;
- Focusing on and promoting a small number of 'significant stories; through a number of channels; and
- Councillor acting as communication champions.

The report included a communications plan / checklist along with actions arising from adoption of the national principles for public engagement (referenced in Wales Audit Office Report – Good Scrutiny? Good Question!)

Some achievements:

- Wider involvement in question setting - all Scrutiny Councillors and public now involved through advertisement by email, blog and social media.
- Use of social media to promote significant stories e.g. scrutiny blog ([www.swanseascrutiny.co.uk](http://www.swanseascrutiny.co.uk))
- Scrutiny Dispatches – quarterly report to council on impact
- Using partners to help with consultations, e.g. schools and economic activity
- Engaging with stakeholders beyond completion of inquiries
- On-line publications page developed - includes all scrutiny agenda packs, reports and letters as well as responses from Cabinet Members. Filters enable easy access to publications by topic, publication type or meeting type. Publications linked to a specific piece of work can now be viewed in one place. The page can be found here: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications>. The reason for introducing the page was to make the work of scrutiny more transparent and accessible following a suggestion from Wales Audit Office during the recent corporate assessment.

#### 7.4 Protocol for Co-option

The Committee developed a protocol for co-option to ensure a consistent approach that should be adopted across Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups. The protocol outlined the benefits of co-option and the thinking that should be undertaken to best inform any decisions about co-option. It was designed to give clarity to conveners and scrutiny councillors about what steps to take.

The protocol emphasises that there should be a strong case for co-opting someone, who rather than giving evidence, would work alongside scrutiny members to carry out the scrutiny. The protocol highlights the importance of having a clear rationale, taking advice (relevant officers) and ensuring that there are no potential conflicts of interest. It also reminds councillors that there are different ways of engaging people in the work of scrutiny.

## 7.5 Scrutiny Development Session: Making Scrutiny More Effective

A development session was held on 29 January 2015 facilitated by Ian Bottrill from the Centre for Public Scrutiny in Wales.

From the session there were a number of proposals:

- Develop closer working with the Evening Post to get scrutiny work better publicised
- Consider how councillor attendance at panel meetings and working groups can be publicised
- Develop a smarter and consistent way of writing recommendations to recognise the difference between 'quick wins' and longer term outcomes
- Discuss with Cabinet how engagement with scrutiny might be developed
- Improve how the public are informed about the process for particular pieces of scrutiny work – in civic centre reception and online
- Improve visibility of scrutiny at council in order to give the scrutiny process more status.

## 7.6 Scrutiny Improvement / Self-Evaluation Workshop

On 18 March 2015 the committee arranged an improvement / self-evaluation workshop which also involved those councillors who have acted as conveners. The aim was to discuss how well scrutiny has worked over the last 12 months. A small number of improvement priorities for the next 12 months were identified by those present:

- Developing the relationship with the Executive e.g. to ensure alignment of scrutiny work and executive work
- More public information about the impact of scrutiny e.g. getting more stuff in the Evening Post, and exploring other ways to promote the impact
- Scrutiny topic prioritisation e.g. using different methods for some topics, consider issues where all scrutiny councillors could be involved as opposed to a small group, briefings to help prepare members for scrutiny

7.7 The following will also need to be taken into account to inform future improvement and development actions:

- Wales Audit Office Report: Good Scrutiny? Good Question!
- WLGA Peer Review
- WAO Corporate Assessment

## 8. Developing the Work Programme for 2015/16

8.1 A Work Planning Conference will take place in May to consider and identify priorities for scrutiny for the coming year. As well as new topics

the work programme will include activities that need to be carried over, either because of their importance or because work is incomplete.

## 8.2 Work Outstanding

The following work may need to be carried over from the current work plan:

- Inquiry Panels
  - Corporate Culture (*completion due: May*)
  - Education Inclusion (*completion due: August*)
  - School Governance (*completion due: October*)
  - Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (*pre-inquiry working group to be set up*)
  
- Follow up of Previous Scrutiny Inquiries
  - Support to Care Leavers
  - Services for Looked After Children
  - Public Transport (*meeting planned 20 April*)
  - Economic Inactivity
  - Attainment & Wellbeing (*meeting planned 30 April*)
  - Inward Investment
  - Public Engagement
  - Streetscene
  - Social Care at Home
  
- Performance Panels / Other Panels
  - Service Improvement & Finance
  - Schools
  - Child & Family Services
  - Local Service Board (*multi-agency Panel*)
  - Transformation of Adult Social Services (*relevant to its work the Panel have had an agreement in-principle from the Welsh Government Minister for Health & Social Services, Mark Drakeford, to attend a scrutiny seminar on 14 May in Swansea on implications of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act - exact format of the event and agenda to be agreed with the Minister*)
  
- Working Groups
  - Sustainability (*meeting planned 14 May*)
  - Local Flood Risk Management
  - Roads / Highway Maintenance
  - Young Carers
  - Target Areas
  - Civic Events
  - Welsh Housing Quality Standard

- 8.3 The Committee is invited to share ideas about any other topics that might need to be looked at by scrutiny in future.
- 8.4 Forward Look – the committee is invited to consider the available information on future cabinet business (attached as **Appendix 7**) and any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny, taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications.
- 8.5 The first scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee in the new council year is expected to be 8 June 2015.

## **9. Scrutiny Annual Report**

- 9.1 The key achievements from the scrutiny work carried out over the past year will be featured in the Scrutiny Annual Report which will be published in the next few months.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1 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.

## **11. Legal Implications**

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

**Background papers:** None

Date: 2 April 2015

Legal Officer: Wendy Parkin

Finance Officer: Paul Cridland

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Programme Committee Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: The Committee's Completed Work Plan 2013/14

Appendix 3a: Overall Scrutiny Work Programme Timetable 2013/14

Appendix 3b: Progress of Panels and Working Groups

Appendix 4: Scrutiny Councillor / Officer Leads

Appendix 5: Scrutiny Performance Data

Appendix 6: Annual Councillor Scrutiny Survey Results

Appendix 7: Forward Look (Cabinet Business)