

Appendix 6b - Annual Stakeholder Survey 2015
Councillors

All councillors and co-opted members received a copy of the annual stakeholder survey. 23 completed the survey. The results were analysed and the results were as follows.

1. Are you a:

Councillor – Cabinet Member - 17.4% (4)

Councillor – Non Executive Member - 78.3% (18)

Co-opted Members – 4.3% (1)

Scrutiny Arrangements

The scrutiny function is delivered through the work of the Scrutiny Programme Committee together with a number of topic-based Scrutiny Inquiry and Performance Panels, and Working Groups.

2. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
a. The scrutiny arrangements are working well.	17.4% (4)	60.9% (14)	13.0% (3)	8.7% (2)
b. Scrutiny works in a cross cutting fashion and not restricted to departmental silos.	34.8% (8)	47.8% (11)	13.0% (3)	4.3% (1)
c. Non-executive members have good opportunities to participate in scrutiny.	47.8% (11)	47.8% (11)	0% (0)	4.3% (1)
d. I have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny.	47.8% (11)	43.5% (10)	4.3% (1)	4.3% (1)
e. Scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the Council.	30.4% (7)	52.2% (12)	13.0% (3)	4.3% (1)

Methods of Working

i) 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. It also holds formal questioning sessions with Cabinet Members and its work may cover a broad range of policy and service issues.

3 Have you been a member of the Scrutiny Programme Committee?

Yes – 60.9% (14)

No - 39.1% (9)

4. If yes, how useful has the work of the committee been?

Very useful – 57.1% (8)
Fairly useful – 42.9% (6)
Not very useful – 0
Not at all useful - 0

ii) Inquiry Panels undertake in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern. These are expected to take up to six months and will result in a final report being published with conclusions and recommendations, informed by the evidence gathered, that is presented to cabinet for decision.

5. Have you been a member of an Inquiry Panel?

Yes – 82.6% (19)
No – 17.4% (4)

6. If yes, how useful have you found this way of working?

Very useful – 68.4% (13)
Fairly useful – 26.3% (5)
Not very useful – 5.3% (1)
Not at all useful - 0

iii) Performance Panels provide in-depth monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas. Performance panels are expected to have ongoing correspondence with relevant cabinet members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, about services.

7. Have you been a member of a Performance Panel?

Yes – 65.2% (15)
No – 34.8% (8)

8. If yes, how useful have you found this way of working?

Very useful - 66.7% (10)
Fairly useful - 33.3% (5)
Not very useful - 0
Not at all useful - 0

iv) Scrutiny Working Groups provide opportunity for one-off meetings for 'light touch' scrutiny of a topic of interest, resulting in a letter to relevant cabinet member(s) with views and recommendations.

9. Have you been a member of a Scrutiny Working Group?

Yes - 65.2% (15)
No - 34.8% (8)

10. If yes, how useful have you found this way of working?

Very useful – 86.7% (13)

Fairly useful – 13.3% (2)

Not very useful – 0

Not at all useful – 0

Officer Support

11. How would you rate the level of support you receive from the scrutiny team? Please tick ONE box

Excellent - 60.9% (14)

Very good – 30.4% (7)

Good – 8.7% (2)

Satisfactory – 0

Poor - 0

12. How could the scrutiny support be improved?

The comments received were analysed and the following themes emerged:

- The Scrutiny Officers are very helpful. If anything they tend to provide too much information rather than allow the Members to think for themselves.
- Maybe if some of the recommendations were actually implemented!
- Sometimes it seems the questions I am asked are not in the areas I was advised they would be, and they can be in areas I didn't think were being scrutinised or were not in my portfolio. A better understanding of what the focus was would benefit all.
- They are excellent now
- An office which members could go to and then find out what is currently going on.
- Need up to date and accurate information from council. Furthermore the information should be concise and in a form that all members can read easily.
- The ruling political group should listen more to opposition members.
- Sharing of ideas/proposals if areas could be crossed matched on service areas
- Try to encourage all non executive members to participate. Days and times of all panels should be sent to members.
- Knowledge across all groups. Training is paramount. Compare other councils, educate how we are performing. I have said this before scrutiny staff have always been very good. Nothing is too much for them. Very helpful.
- I still feel that there are topics that are being duplicated e.g. within school performance.
- List of acronyms

Training & Development

13. Do you have any training and development needs that you feel would assist you in your role as a Scrutiny Committee/Panel member? Please tick ONE box

- Yes I do have training and development needs - 9.1% (2)
I am ok at the moment but I would like to receive information on any future opportunities - 68.2% (15)
No I do not have any training and development needs - 18.2% (4)
N/A - 4.5% (1)

14. If you do have any training and development needs? Please give further detail below.

The following comment was received:

- Budgets

Suggestions for the Scrutiny Work Programme

All councillors are encouraged to contribute ideas about future topics for scrutiny. If there is an issue of concern where scrutiny could make a difference please let us know. A Scrutiny Work Planning Conference will take place in May and your ideas will be considered and prioritised to ensure the future scrutiny work programme is effective and focussed on the right things.

15. Do you have any suggestions of topics for in-depth inquiries? If so, please indicate why?

The following comments were received:

- Pre decision scrutiny on the Tidal Lagoon
- Anti-smoking policies in Swansea
- Healthy Urban planning, how the LDP and planning in general was set up for the major Developments in the city centre and around the north of Swansea.
- What the influence of a councillor is on the policies and aims of Western Bay is? Are our Old People's homes fit for the future? How do we encourage a more commercial approach within the council, exploring potential for earnings.
- Transportation and the way that we look at procurement of vehicles.
- Procurement
- Human Trafficking
- The Schools budget, school transport and building use.
- The rise in self harming in Swansea
- Educating at home
- Housing prospects
- Renewable energy - it is being promoted by people e.g. arts graduate who have no comprehension of science or energy needs.

- Joining up of information in regards to council own buildings in regards to procurement work/costs for the clients.
- Empty houses through our city. Presentation would be worthwhile. WHQ standards.
- The process for supporting the transfer of services and facilities to community/3rd sector/other providers. There does not seem to be a clear and consistent procedure, guidance or strategy

16. Do you have any suggestions of areas for in-depth performance / financial monitoring? If so, please indicate why?

The following comments were received:

- I know we have had a Parks Scrutiny Committee but would it be opportune to follow this up now that the swingeing cuts are biting? Also the work that's been done on Underhill Park would also be good consider replication of.
- Buildings maintenance e.g. schools/ community centres etc.
- Refuse collections
- School Performance
- Social Services
- School budget - The fact that they have a very large budget and members do not understand them.
- Transport
- Adult services (social work). Understanding what their services cost - appear to have a pre-disposition to outsourcing rather than gain in-depth understanding if what is needed to adjust to changes in society.
- Corporate building services/property
- Education and the affect on schools with the 5% reduction.

17. Do you have any suggestions of topics for one-off Working Groups? If so, please indicate why?

The following comments were received:

- Traffic management.
- Renewable energy
- Building services
- Target Areas policy. There seems to have been little if any progress (and certainly no reporting) on this core policy approach for some 9 months.
- Children educated at home

General

18. How would you describe scrutiny?

The following comments were received:

- A good learning experience for a comparatively new Councillor like me. A good opportunity to experience other points of view.
- Questionable
- Sometimes very good, sometimes not focussed, the chairing is vital.
- Good work being carried out lots of positive evidence coming through.
- Ok

- Developing
- Very good (3)
- Very positive with wide ranging topics across the authority, subject to scrutiny.
- Not yet fully developed
- Developing but needs to have a clearer focus on outcomes and impact.
- It is informative and interesting - Team working works well.
- Fragmented - some panels do excellent work but there is no inclusive central body its outcomes get reported to. The Scrutiny Programme Committee is too small, not enough councillors are involved. The volume we have to read, doubt most councillors read the reports from scrutiny panels.
- As good as anywhere else
- Well presented by scrutiny team in ways of reports/findings
- Trying hard and with good support. Executive members need to really understand the role of scrutiny.
- Okay lets try harder
- Definitely the right direction of travel but needs to be more clearly aligned to council policy and priorities. the choice of areas can seem a bit random.
- Works well but not that well publicised.

19. In your opinion, what is good about scrutiny?

The following comments were received:

- Involvement of all councillors, building knowledge, can be very responsive to issues, properly challenge Officers and Cabinet Members.
- Reports/agenda's are always detailed.
- A way of getting things addressed
- Chance to glean information
- Open and transparent
- Opportunity to question Cabinet and officers
- It acts as a critical friend with robust challenge and positive feedback. This may result in an improvement in service delivery.
- Support from officers (2)
- Gives a chance to stop and look at areas of concern
- Opportunity to speak on how policies affect the people we represent. Share ideas with other members from other groups.
- Opportunity to challenge the executive and question senior officers.
- It could be good/better if ruling groups listened more to opposition and acted on it.
- Having in-depth advice on areas which panels are looking into.
- Varied topics
- The information that comes from meetings. Its an education for me and some other newish councillors
- Ability to be cross cutting and to look in depth.
- The ability to bring matters of concern into the public domain.
- Quality of members of the panel.

20. In your opinion, what could be better?

The following comments were received:

- More measurable outcomes.
- Length of time taken to carry out a review - could be much swifter.
- The treatment of Officers can be dis-courteous,
- Cabinet and Officers should give positive replies and be transparent
- Committee should be more robust in challenging Cabinet
- Time should be set aside for public questions
- Could we question end users of services
- Better information across members
- It would be better to have at least one other standing committee with a chair to share the workload
- Attendance is quite poor. Must be improved.
- Co-opting is discouraged - it rarely happens. There should be emphasis on complimenting the knowledge of councillors by expertise from non elected citizens.
- Take politics out of it
- Needs clearer basis for determining the forward plan for the work programme which depends less on the interests (or issues) of individual councillors and more on alignment with council policy.
- I think that the process is improving.

21. Do you have any other suggestions for improvement?

The following comments were received:

- Don't agree with latest from Welsh Government about co-opted members getting voting rights on Scrutiny.
- Max time set for investigations of 6 months.
- More pre-decision, take a regular look at forward look.
- More inclusive service users (public)
- Statistics and charts are sometimes difficult to understand. Relevant information should be written in bold.
- Choice of topics to scrutinise by coloured stickers is fundamentally flawed. Multi application to one topic screws preferences. Only topic eight colours and max 2 per topic makes sense.
- Councillors up their game - read reports and we must all follow up on reports recommendations etc.