

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC CENTRE ON MONDAY,
13 APRIL 2015 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
R A Clay	N J Davies	J W Jones
A C S Colburn	P Downing	D J Lewis
D W Cole	E W Fitzgerald	P M Meara
S E Crouch	T J Hennegan	G J Tanner

Co-opted Members:

D Anderson-Thomas, S Joiner.

Also Present:

B Madahar	-	Scrutiny Co-ordinator
W Parkin	-	Senior Lawyer
S Woon	-	Democratic Services Officer

204 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A M Cook, J P Curtice and R V Smith.

The chair welcomed Councillor David Lewis who was attending his first committee meeting since being recently appointed by Council.

205 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL & PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.**

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

Councillor C E Lloyd - personal - Minute No. 108 – Work for the DVLA.

Councillor D J Lewis - personal - Minute No. 108 – Work for the DVLA.

Mrs S Joiner– personal – Minute No. 108 – Member of The Friends of Pennard Library.

206 **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.

207 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 16 March, 2015, be agreed as a correct record.

208 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION:**

a. **Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Regeneration**

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor R Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Regeneration.

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

The Cabinet Member referred to the City Centre Strategic Framework. It was the view that unless there is a robust, vibrant City Centre then the Region will not be strong region. The re-development of St David's and the City Centre would create more vibrancy and help regenerate the City Centre.

The question session led to discussion of the following:

- The need to encourage people to reside within the City Centre;
- The implications of out-of-town shopping parks and online retailing on the City Centre;
- Proposals in relation to the development of good quality student accommodation within the City Centre to cater for the 8,000 more students as a result of Swansea University's expansion;
- The opportunities for joint working with Carmarthen and Swansea Universities in respect of a joint Archives Service;
- The relocation of the Central Library;
- The plans by the University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) regarding the development of SA1;
- Proposals for the North Dock;
- The implications of the Local Development Plan in relation to housing;
- Consultation with Developers in relation to linking St David's to the Waterfront;
- Future bids in respect of the City of Culture in 2021 which would be dependent on the Council budget and what the Council decides as priorities.
- Work being undertaken in respect of the development of a Cultural Strategy;
- The procedure for developers' offers in respect of Civic Centre;

- Progress with the plans for a Science City;
- Timescales for responses in respect of the City Centre Strategic Framework consultation;
- The proposed purchase of Oceana on the Kingsway for the purpose of office accommodation;
- The proposals for the traffic flow on the Kingsway and the need to ensure it is safe for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and works for retailers; and
- Timescales in relation to the review of Libraries;
- Special Events, including road races.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Regeneration for his attendance.

b. Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor C E Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance.

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

The Cabinet Member advised that his Portfolio focused on 6 key areas. A large majority of work had been spent developing Sustainable Swansea and the Budget. He reported that exciting projects were taking place despite the difficult financial circumstances.

Amongst these he stated that an Innovation Programme had been established; a number of reviews were being carried out as part of the Sustainable Swansea programme to examine specific areas of the Council; improvements had been made to the Corporate Plan (with 5 key priorities) to make it more accessible; a progressive digital culture was being developed; and work was being done to develop a more commercial approach to council business, in order to generate income at a time when budgets were being reduced.

The Chair referred to a question submitted by a member of the public, whose company was involved in the sustainable reuse / recycling of waste electrical and electronic equipment. She posed the question which asked the Cabinet Member (who has sustainable development and future generations within his portfolio) whether he would be embarrassed if a Swansea Company were to establish itself in Spain, before Wales?

The Cabinet Member confirmed that he would be embarrassed, however he stated that the Authority has led the way in Sustainable Development, which the Welsh Government has recognised. He referred to the work in respect of a district heating scheme and Sustainable Development becoming part of Local Authority's day to day thinking. Reference was made to using a balanced scorecard to ensure a more balanced view of organisational performance. He stated that he would be happy to meet the questioner to discuss any issues further.

The Cabinet Member also detailed his role, the role of Officers and Members in the commissioning reviews taking place under Sustainable Swansea.

Members discussed the following:

- The corporate change agenda;
- The implications of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Bill on public bodies;
- The development of commercialism in the Council and the opportunity to work with other large sector organisations;
- Financial benefits derived from sustainable development;
- Tackling rural deprivation by ensuring a digital inclusion strategy is in place;
- The transition arrangements with Capgemini over the ICT service.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance for his attendance.

RESOLVED that the Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Transformation and Performance reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

209 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - LOCAL SERVICE BOARD (COUNCILLOR MARY JONES).**

The Chair paid tribute to the former Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Councillor A M Day, under whose chairmanship the Local Service Board Scrutiny Performance Panel was established.

The following achievements/impact were noted:

- A number of key issues/questions were raised by the Panel throughout the development phase and sessions. These have been used to move the scrutiny work of the Panel forward and to get the Panel to a stage where they are ready to undertake more in depth scrutiny of the work of the LSB.
- The Panel has agreed its preferred approach for the Work Plan 2015/16 - to select an annual LSB priority from the One Swansea Plan to look at in-depth in order to extrapolate findings and conclusions on the effectiveness of the Local Service Board. The overarching question that the panel is seeking to address is "*What difference is Swansea Local Service Board making for citizens?* In order to assist the Panel explore and answer this question within the context of the LSB, a number of key questions have been agreed.
- The Panel has narrowed the priority down to 2 - Domestic Abuse and Older People's Independence. Both have recently been the focus of the LSB's new workshop style approach. The panel will look at the Older People's Independence challenge first.

- As a result of points raised by the Panel around communication and visibility of the LSB, the LSB has now agreed that members of the public will be allowed to attend LSB meetings from July onwards.
- To improve the One Swansea Plan Annual Review process, the convener's letter (March meeting) to the Chair of the LSB raised a number of recommendations and suggestions:
 - There should be greater visibility of the indicators that track the aspirations for each Challenge within the One Swansea Plan.
 - The LSB should introduce a system that shows the status of each indicator. An example of this is the RAG (traffic light) system which is used to measure and track performance.
 - The LSB should introduce a clear mechanism that outlines the priorities of their work plan for the forthcoming year.

In relation the future work programme, Councillor Jones stated that:

- A meeting is planned for April so the Panel can invite the Director of People to attend and give an initial briefing / overview of the Older People's Independence priority. The Panel will meet again on 18 May.
- The Panel's work plan for 2015/16 will be drafted following the April and May meetings.
- The Panel will be discussing a possible move from bi-monthly to monthly meetings.

RESOLVED that the report be **NOTED**.

210 **ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2014-15.**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator stated that the purpose of the report was to assist Councillors take stock of the work done during the municipal year and reflect on the experience. The Committee were also encouraged to consider topics that may be examined in the forthcoming municipal year.

The report provided the committee with:

- A summary of the work of the Committee and the overall scrutiny work programme
- Feedback on the performance of scrutiny and the councillor survey
- A summary of improvement activities carried out
- A list of outstanding work that may be carried over

Members were invited to give views about the work programme and experience of scrutiny to help evaluate how well things have worked and identify areas for improvement. The committee considered the information provided and the following issues were raised during discussion:

Practice:

Overall Work Programme

- Scrutiny too wide / superficial not deep

- Too many small pieces of work
- More in-depth work would be better
- Scrutiny better when it is being forensic and investigative

Scrutiny of Cabinet

- Not enough scrutiny of cabinet members – some have particularly large portfolio responsibilities
- More pre-decision scrutiny – examples from last year worked well (e.g. Underhill Park). Scrutiny should be more aligned with decision-making, particularly with a lot of work going on e.g. city centre regeneration
- Idea of focussing on a few cabinet members to look at everything they do – or assign responsibility to individual committee members to 'shadow' cabinet members and report back to committee
- Questioning of cabinet members could be stronger

Participation

- More councillors should be involved in scrutiny

Environment:

- Officers willingness to engage with scrutiny / support the scrutiny process is inconsistent across the Council
- Feeling that organisational support generally for scrutiny lacking

Some ideas for future scrutiny were shared:

- Planning S.106 agreements
- Western Bay – need to move quicker on establishing scrutiny arrangements

There was also a discussion about dealing with information and acknowledgement that, although rarely necessary, the committee could resolve to go into closed session should it wish to consider matters that could not be discussed in public e.g. an issue of commercial sensitivity.

The Chair referred to the annual councillor scrutiny questionnaire, and reminder those who had not completed the survey to do so.

The chair also proposed a date for the annual scrutiny work plan conference, which will enable all scrutiny councillors to participate in the identification of potential scrutiny topics, based on relevant advice.

The committee also noted a public request for scrutiny in relation to the Blue Badge Scheme application process. Having sought advice from the relevant Head of Service the chair proposed that no action be taken however that the Head of Service be instructed to write to the member of the public responding to the issues raised. The chair summarised the advice received pointing out the process is being applied consistently as per Welsh Government guidance, however that the Leader of the Council is aware of issues and is in dialogue with the Welsh Government about the situation in Swansea.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the Annual Scrutiny Work Planning Conference be held on 8 June 2015, in place of the scheduled committee meeting;
- b. no action be taken following the public request for scrutiny on the Blue Badge Scheme however the Head of Service be asked to write back to the member of public.

211 **MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS.**

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

RESOLVED that Councillor J Stanton be added to the Membership of the Transformation of Adult Social Services Panel.

212 **SCRUTINY LETTERS:**

The Chair reported the updated Scrutiny Letters Log and referred to the recent correspondence between Scrutiny and Cabinet Members.

The Chair referred to a further letter from a parent of Parkland Primary School regarding the proposed land sale and requesting scrutiny over the issue of a Childrens' Rights Impact Assessment. With reference to the letter from the Cabinet Member for Services for Children and Young People within the agenda she summarised the advice received and proposed no action as a review of the sale of school land is already taking place, and no clear proposals or decisions have been made, and clarification has been provided on when impact assessments would be carried out. The Chair stated that she would write back to the parent accordingly to inform of the view of the committee and to clarify the role of the scrutiny in this matter.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Letters Log be **NOTED**.

213 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS:**

The Chair fed back on the recent National Conference on Scrutiny, Partnership, Collaboration and Regulation (held on 27 March, 2015). The conference, facilitated by Cardiff Business School, several local authorities, Welsh Government and the Centre for Public Scrutiny, was about shared accountability. It focused on developing joint scrutiny, the interface between internal scrutiny and external review, and public service accountability in Wales. Of particular interest was the launch of a new handbook on joint scrutiny, produced by Cardiff Business School, which provides a step by step guide to joint scrutiny.

Feedback was also given on the Welsh Government Regional Engagement Event (held on 31 March, 2015). The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of the proposals set out in the White Paper on Reforming Local Government and

engagement on the vision for Local Government in Wales. This is currently out for consultation open until 28 April. The following was noted:

- Paper contains some clear provisions for legislation but some aspects are a little less clear and require debate, so comments will influence thinking
- Drivers for change: financial situation; Local Government resilience / changing nature of service delivery; increased devolution to Welsh Government
- Paper covers 3 main areas:
 - Operation of democratic processes / relationship between central and local government
 - Less direction from central government, increased choice and power to innovate locally
 - Clarity of respective roles between leaders/executives and officer Executive Boards
 - Diversity in elected membership
 - Management of Corporate Governance / Corporate Improvement and local accountability
 - Less emphasis on external review by auditors, more emphasis on internal review / assurance through framework of self-assessment by executives / senior management and assurance carried out through Audit Committees and Scrutiny.
 - Developing relationship between external review bodies and scrutiny to strengthen role of scrutiny in improvement process – auditors / inspectors engaging with scrutiny to help scrutiny ask for the right information / the right questions to challenge and support improvement
 - Relationship between local government and communities
 - Reliance on communities and engagement over asset transfer e.g. running local facilities
 - Proposes model of local area 'boards' (mix of councillors, public services, community representation) to identify local priorities / operational issues
 - Clustering of community and town councils with increased freedom to deliver improvements
- Draft Bill expected Autumn 2015
- New Bill likely to be delivered after Welsh Government elections in 2016

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordinator circulate:

- (a) web-link to the Welsh Government consultation on the White Paper; and
- (b) copy of the handbook on joint scrutiny

214 **FOR INFORMATION: AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PLAN.**

RESOLVED that the Audit Committee Work Plan be **NOTED**.

215 **DATE AND TIME OF UPCOMING PANEL / WORKING GROUP MEETINGS:**

The date and time of upcoming Panel/Working Group meetings were submitted for information to help increase the visibility of this work and encourage participation.

The meeting ended at 6.39 pm

CHAIR