

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 10 August 2015

SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Purpose	This report invites the committee to discuss and consider support and development needs for scrutiny councillors, in particular to help deliver agreed improvement outcomes for scrutiny.
Content	The report provides information on: a) agreed scrutiny improvement outcomes b) feedback from the annual councillor survey on training and development needs c) correspondence on councillor support and development services from the Welsh Local Government Association
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss and consider areas for support and development
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer & Report Author	Dave Mckenna, Scrutiny Manager Tel: 01792 636090 E-mail: dave.mckenna@swansea.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Over the course of the year scrutiny councillors and officers will be involved in ad hoc development and improvement events in order to support and deliver effective scrutiny. This will include opportunities to attend 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. Feedback is provided to the committee to ensure learning from such events can be disseminated.
- 1.2 The recent Welsh Government White Paper; 'Power to Local People' underlines the continuing importance being placed on scrutiny as an essential element of local democracy and good governance. This focus on scrutiny at the national level is very welcome. However, recognition will also have to be given to the increased demands on scrutiny councillors that will come with this increasing role.

1.3 In order that a more focused and structured development plan for the year ahead can be created the committee is asked to consider the following:

- a) agreed scrutiny improvement outcomes;
- b) feedback from the annual councillor survey on training and development needs; and
- c) correspondence on councillor support and development services from the Welsh Local Government Association.

2. Scrutiny Improvement Outcomes

2.1 The Scrutiny Annual report for 2014/5 recently presented to Council identified six improvement outcomes that will provide a focus for scrutiny in the year ahead:

1. We need to talk more to cabinet members so that we can plan better and ensure that our work is making a difference
2. We need to align the work of scrutiny more closely to the five corporate priorities so that we can focus and impact on the things that matter.
3. We need more briefings and development sessions so that we have the knowledge and skills we need
4. We need more coverage in the media so that the public are more aware of our work
5. We need more members of the public contributing to scrutiny meetings so that we can reflect their views in our work
6. We need closer links with regulators and inspectors so that we can provide a more coordinated and effective challenge

2.2 Over the next 12 months we will work on practical ways to achieve these outcomes and improve scrutiny in Swansea. These are to be subject to wider discussion by scrutiny members so the committee and panels should consider implications for their work and how they can contribute to the outcomes in their own work plans, i.e. what are we doing now for each of the outcomes? what more do we need to do?

2.3 Any support and development programme should make a contribution to achieving these improvement outcomes.

2.4 The committee's views are invited.

3. Annual Councillor Survey

3.1 One of the questions the annual councillor scrutiny survey asks is about training and development needs. The results of survey are presented below:

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*

<i>Yes I do have training and development needs</i>	- 21.9% (27)
<i>I am ok at the moment but I would like to receive information on any future opportunities</i>	- 59.4% (19)
<i>No I do not have any training and development needs</i>	- 15.6% (5)
<i>N/A</i>	- 3.1% (1)

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

The following comments was received:

- *budgets*
- *chairing of meetings*
- *open to all learning*
- *training should always be kept up to date*
- *more scrutiny experience*
- *I feel that a lot of what I am involved in is assuming that I have more knowledge than I have. Perhaps if I belonged to a bigger group/party I would be involved with a training programme. I am only just understanding the difference between panels, scrutiny and the committee structure.*

3.2 The committee should consider this feedback in identifying areas where support and development is necessary.

4. WLGA Services

4.1 The Welsh Local Government Association have recently contacted councils across Wales to inform of the services that are on offer in relation to councillor support and development. This is a revised offer following the withdrawal of the Improvement Grant from the Welsh Government.

4.2 The WLGA will continue to coordinate and provide strategic national guidance and support to local authorities but will offer a more focused range of bespoke in-house training and support packages to councils and councillors. The WLGA will charge for some services (e.g. member training workshops) from 1st April 2015. See leaflet for attached for details – **Appendix 1**.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Background Papers: None

Legal Officer: Tracey Meredith

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley