

## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 10 August 2015

#### SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

<b>Purpose</b>	This report reviews current work and invites the committee to consider new scrutiny activities, taking into account feedback from the recent Scrutiny Work Planning Conference.
<b>Content</b>	The current work programme is attached, including a plan for future committee meetings, for panels and working groups, and proposals for new work.
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• accept or make changes to the scrutiny work programme</li><li>• agree proposals for new scrutiny activities</li><li>• plan for the committee meetings ahead</li><li>• review progress of established panels and working groups</li><li>• consider opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services
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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The work of scrutiny aims to:
- help improve services
  - provide an effective challenge to the executive
  - engage members in the development of policies, strategies and plans
  - engage the public
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Work Programme is guided by the overriding principle that the work of scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of scrutiny time and resources.

It also needs to be:

- manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available
- relevant to council priorities
- adding value and having maximum impact
- coordinated and avoid duplication

- 1.4 The work of scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the committee itself, by establishing informal panels or via one-off working groups.
- 1.5 Scrutiny will regularly send letters to Cabinet Members communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement and, where appropriate, by producing reports. Inquiry panels will 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. Inquiry panels will reconvene to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and the impact of their work – usually 6-12 months following cabinet decision.
- 1.6 Although much of the work of scrutiny is carried out by informal panels and working groups these meetings are accessible to the public. Agendas, reports and letters relating to all scrutiny activities are published on-line: <http://swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications>.

## **2. Scrutiny Work Programme**

### **2.1 Scrutiny Programme Committee:**

- 2.1.1 The committee's work plan for the year ahead is attached as **Appendix 1**. This includes a schedule of future Cabinet Member Question & Answer Sessions. This should be kept under review to ensure it represents a robust and effective plan.
- 2.1.2 Committee members should review and confirm items for the next and future meetings giving specific consideration to who should attend so that meetings are always well planned and prepared for, e.g. information required and key questions that the committee wishes to ask. The committee will have the opportunity to review priorities and introduce issues of concern as and when they arise, e.g. pre-decision scrutiny which may require extra meetings.
- 2.1.3 Pre-decision scrutiny – the committee is invited to consider the available information on future cabinet business (see Forward Look attached as **Appendix 2**) and any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny, taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications. Any requests will require discussion with relevant Cabinet Member(s) to confirm timescales and window of opportunity for scrutiny involvement. Pre-decision scrutiny enables scrutiny to develop understanding about and ask questions on proposed Cabinet reports to provide 'critical friend' challenge and influence decision-making.

2.1.4 Committee Review - the review of the Gypsy & Traveller Site Search Process (commenced in February 2014) is being carried out via special meetings of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. Evidence gathering has now been completed and a final report is being prepared to conclude this review.

2.2 Panels and Working Groups:

2.2.1 **Appendix 3a & 3b** provide a snapshot of progress with the informal panels and working groups established by the committee to carry out specific activities and their current position.

2.2.2 For further information a contact list for lead scrutiny members and officers is also contained in **Appendix 4**.

2.3 New Topics:

2.3.1 At the last meeting the committee discussed what additional work should be included in the work programme, reflecting on feedback from the Scrutiny Work Planning Conference. The committee thought about whether anything important was missing, the balance across Cabinet portfolios and aligning scrutiny work more closely with corporate priorities. A proposal for new work, based on that discussion, is attached for agreement (**Appendix 5**).

3. **Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action**

3.1 None received.

4. **Financial Implications**

4.1 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.

5. **Legal Implications**

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

**Background papers:** None

Legal Officer: Tracey Meredith

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Committee Work Plan 2015/16

Appendix 2: Forward Look (Cabinet Business)

Appendix 3a: Overall Scrutiny Work Programme Timetable 2015/16

Appendix 3b: Progress of Panels and Working Groups

Appendix 4: Scrutiny Councillor / Officer Leads

Appendix 5: Proposal for New Work