

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 10 AUGUST 2015 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
A M Cook	J P Curtice	J W Jones
A C S Colburn	N J Davies	P M Meara
D W Cole	E W Fitzgerald	R V Smith
S E Crouch	T J Hennegan	G J Tanner

Co-opted Members: Sarah Joiner
David Anderson-Thomas

Also Present:

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

20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R A Clay.

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

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

Councillor P M Meara - personal - Minute No. 24 – Member of Foster Panel.

Mrs S Joiner – personal – Minute No. 24 – Chair of Friends of Pennard Library.

22 **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.

23 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 13 July, 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

24 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR SERVICES FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE.**

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor Christine Richards, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Services to Children and Young People.

Members noted the written information provided by Councillor Richards in relation to portfolio objectives and progress (including work on Families First and Flying Start) which assisted the Committee in focusing on priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

The Cabinet Member referred to work in respect of:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the success in developing all but 5 Swansea Schools as Rights Respecting Schools;
- The reconfiguration of Youth Services focussing on early intervention and prevention;
- Positive progress being made within Child and Family Services.

There was specific discussion by the committee on:

- Children's Social Services
- Children & Young People's Rights Scheme
- Young People Services
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Children's University
- Employment Opportunities for Looked After Children
- Flying Start
- Education for Gypsy & Traveller Children
- Children & Young People's Partnership

In response to Member questions the Cabinet Member for Services to Children and Young People stated that:

- 1) As far as the Council and other partners were aware, there were no signs of gangs within Swansea who were sexually exploiting vulnerable children. However, there were people who sexually abuse and exploit children and it was everyone's responsibility to be the eyes and ears in the local community. Safeguarding was one of the Council's Corporate Objectives and she encouraged all Councillors to participate in respect of online sexual exploitation training. With regard to the child sexual exploitation training offered to staff, she reported that there had been some positive outcomes with referrals. The Child Sexual Exploitation Conference last October had been well attended with private, public and third sector organisations and had been successful in raising awareness;
- 2) She would be meeting with representatives of Swansea University in the next few weeks regarding the development of the Children's University initiative in Swansea;

- 3) She supported the idea of the Council being the 'Family Firm' and was working with officers to see how employment opportunities for the Looked After Children (LAC) population can be developed;
- 4) The Gypsy Traveller Education Service had moved into the Poverty and Prevention Service Unit and regardless of where the provision was situated it was her aim to ensure joined up working around young people. Gypsy Travellers had been consulted and were happy to stay with people that they knew and trusted.
- 5) With the reduction in budgets and possible closure of rural libraries, local schools would have a role to play to ensure children had access to books and information.
- 6) Changes in respect of the Child and Family Services budget had been achieved as a result of the Safer LAC reduction strategy and the increased use of Foster Swansea.
- 7) The reduction of opening hours in Info-nation had been as a result of consultation with young people and discussions were ongoing with the Local Health Board with regard to funding contributions.

The Cabinet Member also suggested some scrutiny around the effectiveness of the Children & Young People's Partnership, in particular lack of meetings of the CYP Executive Board in the last year.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for her attendance.

RESOLVED that the Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Cabinet Member reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

25 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES.**

The Convenor of the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel, Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams, presented a panel update.

He referred to the work carried out over the last few months, as well as the most recent meeting which took place earlier that day. The update report covered the main issues looked at by the Panel and raised with the Cabinet Member, and the impact of the Panel's work.

He congratulated Child Family Services management and staff for its progress in improving services, referring to latest performance data seen by the Panel. It was noted that the department was developing a national reputation for being innovative. However, there are a number of key issues which the Panel has been watching closely, including allocation of cases, sickness levels, and re-referral rates.

There was some discussion about joint working between social services, the Police, and other agencies and protocols regarding referrals. There was also discussion about communication between local authorities when children move between areas.

In response to a question, the Convenor stated that he was reasonably happy with the level of information provided from the Western Bay Regional Partnership, when discussing the Western Bay Safeguarding Board.

The Chair thanked the Convenor of the Child & Family Service Scrutiny Performance Panel for his informative update.

RESOLVED that the update report be **NOTED**.

26 **SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT.**

The Chair presented a report which invited discussion and consideration of support and development needs for scrutiny councillors, in particular to help deliver agreed improvement outcomes for scrutiny.

The committee was provided with information on:

- Agreed scrutiny improvement outcomes;
- Feedback from the annual councillor survey on training and development needs; and
- Correspondence on councillor support and development services offered by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), including various councillor skills workshops.

A discussion and the following areas for potential training were identified as most important:

- Council Budget / Financial Scrutiny;
- Scrutiny Questioning Skills (possible WLGA workshop)
- Effective Scrutiny (possible WLGA workshop)

RESOLVED that any scrutiny support and development programme be coordinated with the work of the Democratic Services Committee on training needs.

27 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16.**

The report of the Chair reviewed current work and invited the committee to consider new scrutiny activities, taking into account feedback from the recent Scrutiny Work Planning Conference.

The report provided the committee with:

- The current scrutiny work programme
- A plan for future committee meetings
- A progress report on the various existing Panels and Working Groups
- Proposals for new work
- Cabinet forward plan for opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny

A discussion ensued regarding potential new scrutiny topics that were proposed, including balance of scrutiny across Cabinet portfolios:

Potential new Inquiries:	Potential new Working Groups (one-offs)
1. Building Sustainable Communities	1. Civic Events
2. Tackling Poverty	2. Welsh Housing Quality Standard
3. Sustainability – Food Security	3. Tethered Horses
4. Transition from Children to Adult Social Care	4. Corporate Building Services
	5. Roads / Highway Maintenance

It was also proposed that a look at the Procurement Service be referred to the Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel.

RESOLVED that:

- a. the committee work plan be accepted;
- b. proposals for new activities for the Scrutiny Work Programme be agreed in the order of priority indicated above; and
- c. expressions of interest from all scrutiny councillors be invited for the next pieces of work.

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

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

RESOLVED that in respect of the proposed Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services inquiry:

- a. Councillor Elliot King be added to the group;
- b. the group be invited to identify an interim convener at their first meeting and report back to the committee.

29 **SCRUTINY LETTERS:**

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

It was noted that a Cabinet Member response to the letter from the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel was still awaited and needed to be followed up.

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

30 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

The Chair stated that there had been no recent Scrutiny events to report on.

31 **UPCOMING SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

The Chair stated that there were no upcoming Scrutiny events.

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

The Chair stated that work plans should also be shared between the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel and Audit Committee.

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

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

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

The meeting ended at 5.59 pm

CHAIR