

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 September 2015

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Purpose	This report reviews the current scrutiny work programme.
Content	The current work programme is described, including the plan for future committee meetings, and progress of panels and working groups.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• accept or make changes to the scrutiny work programme• plan for the committee meetings ahead• review progress of established panels and working groups• consider opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny
Lead Councillor	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair
Lead Officer	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 agreed what additional work should be included in the work programme, reflecting on feedback from the Scrutiny Work Planning Conference:

Potential New Inquiries:	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

2.3.2 Expressions of interest have been sought from scrutiny councillors for some of this work and reported separately for agreement at Item 10.

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

3.1 A request was submitted to scrutiny from the secretary of a residents group (the Parc Y Werin Committee) regarding concerns about the appropriation of land at Parc Y Werin, Gorseinon for new build of Gorseinon Primary School. They wished to present evidence to the committee regarding the public consultation and the cabinet decision to proceed with this project.

3.2 It was determined that the involvement of scrutiny in this matter was inappropriate. The request was not allowed on the following grounds: the matter relates to a quasi-judicial matter (planning application).

The response provided by the chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee highlights that:

- This matter is due to proceed through a formal planning application process in the near future (21 September) and following the appropriate consultation period would then be considered and a decision made in late November or early December.

- As such any concerns can and indeed should be considered as part of this process, which has been made clear through the stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken.
- The decision made by Cabinet on July 16 regarding the appropriation of the land was formally called in by councillors, but the decision was upheld.
- Our understanding is that the issues they wish to raise have already been considered. However the Parc y Werin Committee has every opportunity to again raise their concerns as part of the planning decision process.

The Committee is scheduled to meet with Cllr Jennifer Raynor for a Q & A on the Education portfolio on 12 October, therefore the residents group has been invited to suggest any questions that should be put by the committee to the Cabinet Member.

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: Wendy Parkin

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