

## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 December 2015

#### SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

<b>Purpose</b>	This report reviews the current scrutiny work programme.
<b>Content</b>	The current work programme is described, including the plan for future committee meetings, and progress of panels and working groups.
<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>• 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) has been 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. It is anticipated that this will be presented to committee for agreement in December / January.

## 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**.

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

3.1 None.

## 4. **Introduction of a Public Question Time**

4.1 The committee recently discussed Scrutiny Improvement Outcomes and agreed actions to help deliver these. One of the Improvement Outcomes is 'We need more members of the public contributing to scrutiny meetings so that we can reflect their views in our work'. Following the committee's agreement to develop opportunities for public participation it is proposed to introduce a 'Public Question Time' at future committee meetings, starting with the meeting on 11 January 2016.

4.2 In accordance with Council Procedure Rules the Public Question Time will operate in the same way that it operates at Council and Cabinet. In practice for the committee this will mean:

- Any member of the public present may put a question to the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and any Cabinet Member(s) present on any matter included on the open part of the agenda, excluding Apologies for Absence, Councillors Disclosures of Interest, and Minutes of Previous Meetings.
- A 10 minute period will be allocated for Public Question Time
- No notice has to be given of a Public Question but any submitted in advance will receive priority within the allotted 10 minutes.

4.3 The committee will need to raise awareness of this with Cabinet Members as well as promote the opportunity, to get more members of the public contributing to scrutiny meetings and increase public participation.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 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.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 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