

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2015 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

U C Clay
A M Cook
T J Hennegan
R V Smith

Councillor(s)

A C S Colburn
S E Crouch
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

D W Cole
N J Davies
P M Meara

Co-opted Member(s)

F M Gordon

Co-opted Member(s)

P R Hood-Williams

Officer(s)

P Holmes
B Madahar

Officer(s)

W Parkin
L Richards

Officer(s)

P Roberts
S Woon

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J P Curtice, E W Fitzgerald, D J Lewis and G J Tanner
Co-opted Member(s): D Anderson-Thomas

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

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

92 **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.

93 **MINUTES:**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 9 November, 2015 and 18 November, 2015, be agreed as a correct record.

94 **CO-OPTION OF SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL CONVENERS.**

The Chair presented a report which sought Committee approval for the co-option of Scrutiny Performance Panel Conveners to enable attendance at Committee meetings.

Members noted the guidance on co-option and the benefits of their co-option to the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

RESOLVED that Performance Panel Conveners be co-opted to the Scrutiny Programme Committee:

Service Improvement & Finance	–	Cllr. Chris Holley
Child & Family Services	–	Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams
Schools	–	Cllr. Fiona Gordon

95 **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 findings of the recent CSSIW report and some performance issues raised, which the Panel will continue to monitor.

He referred to the work carried out over the last few months by the Panel contained in the update report.

He stated that the Panel had also been engaged in scrutinising the development of Post 16 Service over the last 2 years and had been able to give views on important aspects of the development. He reported that the Panel was pleased that the new contract had been awarded and it had been agreed to engage with Barnardo's once the service was up and running. The Panel would continue to receive monitoring reports on the new service.

In response to Member questions, the Convenor stated that:

- sickness absence remained a problem within Child and Family Services. A lot of work was on-going with the Department to address the situation;
- The numbers of Looked After Children has fallen over the last year (from 610 to just over 500) and the LAC reduction strategy was in place and being monitored; and
- The issues raised in relation to Children in Need (CIN) and numbers of unborn and under 3-month babies on the Child Protection Register was being closely monitored. It was noted that the increase was a national problem.

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

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

96 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & STRATEGY (LEADER).**

The Committee took the opportunity to question Councillor Rob Stewart, Leader of the Council (Chair of Cabinet).

The questions session focused on Councillor Stewart's role as both Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Strategy, in terms of priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

Councillor Stewart was invited to make any opening remarks before taking questions from the committee.

The question session led to discussion around the following topics:

- The current challenging financial position and projections
- Anti-poverty work
- Development of the City Region and benefits
- Progress with the marketing of Civic Centre and St. David's sites in the City Centre
- Role of the Cabinet Advisory Committees
- Leader's programme of visiting all wards
- Challenges in the next 12 months (including financial, joint working ahead of formal local government reorganisation)
- Expectations for the year ahead (including progress on city centre development, continuation of rebuilding schools programme, completion of commissioning reviews, developments in housebuilding, creation of a more commercial council, innovation)

In response to Member questions the Leader confirmed that:

- The Council had made savings from the current year which equated to around 85% of the target and were on track to achieve savings of 100% by the end of the year;
- The overall financial position cannot be determined until the grants (e.g., Communities First, EMLAS, Flying Start etc) figure is known;
- Schools must not get into the trap of thinking that the reduced funding will only affect this year. Austerity will continue for next 3 years. Headteachers and Governors must continue to plan for up to 2019. This year the Minister is giving £1.85m protection, but there are additional pressures faced by schools. The authority is working with schools to help mitigate implications of austerity. It is clear that in 3-4 years' time we will not be able to fund education in the way we are doing now;
- With regard to the 21 Century Schools Programme, a funding gap still remains;
- He was unable to confirm the exact level of cut for Education and Social Services yet, however, funding will likely reduce by 5% a year;
- Whilst it is not yet known what cuts are to be made to services and what buildings would be closed/disposed of prior to January 2016 when Community Councils set their budgets, the authority is happy to speak to communities about specific buildings / facilities of interest and provide advice and support regarding asset transfer if required. There is already information in the public domain about specific service savings proposals although more decisions will be taken as a result of the outcome of various commissioning reviews underway.

The Chair thanked the Leader for his attendance.

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

97 **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE.**

The Chair presented a report which provided guidance on pre-decision scrutiny ahead of consideration of the Cabinet report on 'City Centre Development Sites – Selection of Preferred Development Partner(s)'.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

98 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC.**

The Committee was requested to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of the item of business identified in the recommendations to the report on the grounds that it/they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the exclusion paragraph of 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation)(Wales) Order 2007 relevant to the item of business as set out in the report.

The Committee considered the public interest test in deciding to exclude the public from the meeting for the items of business where the public interest test was relevant, as set out in the report.

RESOLVED that the public be excluded for the following items of business.

CLOSED SESSION

99 **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: CITY CENTRE DEVELOPMENT SITES - SELECTION OF PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT PARTNER(S) - REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE, DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION.**

The Director of Place, assisted by the Head of Regeneration & Planning, and Physical Regeneration Manager, provided an overview of the cabinet report which contained recommendations regarding the St David's and Civic Centre Sites. The Leader was present to discuss aspects of the report and along with officers responded to various questions.

The Committee highlighted a number of issues about the report and proposals.

RESOLVED that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee presents the views, conclusions and recommendations regarding the report to the Special Cabinet meeting on 17 December, 2015, prior to the Cabinet decision.

OPEN SESSION

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

The report of the Chair reviewed the scrutiny work programme.

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
- Cabinet forward plan for opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny

The chair referred to the plan to introduce a Public Question Time for future committee meetings in order to develop opportunities for public participation.

Councillor U Clay sought approval for the Transformation of Adult Social Services to undertake pre decision scrutiny in respect of a report scheduled for Cabinet on 21 January, 2016 entitled 'Review of Abergelli and The Beeches'.

Further to a previous inquiry carried out on Public Transport, issues were raised which members felt further scrutiny.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the committee work plan be accepted;
- 2) a Public Question Time be introduced on all future Scrutiny Programme Agendas taking effect from 11 January, 2016;
- 3) the request for pre-decision scrutiny in respect of the 'Review of Abergelli and The Beeches' report scheduled for Cabinet on 21 January, 2016, be agreed and considered at the next meeting of the TASS Panel on 11 January, 2016; and
- 4) further work in relation to scrutiny of Public Transport be arranged.

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

No changes were submitted.

102 **SCRUTINY LETTERS.**

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

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

103 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

None.

104 **UPCOMING SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

None.

105 **AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PLAN.**

RESOLVED that the Audit Committee work plan be **NOTED**.

106 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 4.30 P.M. EXCEPT WHERE NOTED):**

The date and time of future Committee Meetings for the 2015/16 Municipal Year was noted.

107 **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 7.00

CHAIR