



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 12 November 2018

Scrutiny Letters

Purpose:	To ensure the Committee is aware of the scrutiny letters produced following various scrutiny activities, and to track responses to date.
Content:	The report includes a log of scrutiny letters produced this year, and provides a copy of correspondence between scrutiny and cabinet members where discussion is required.
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the scrutiny letters and responses• Make comments, observations and recommendations as necessary
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer:	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The production of scrutiny letters has become an established part of the way scrutiny operates in Swansea. Letters from the chair (or conveners) allow scrutiny to communicate directly and quickly with relevant cabinet members.
- 1.2 These letters are used to convey views and conclusions about particular issues discussed and provide the opportunity to raise concerns, ask for further information, and make recommendations. This enables scrutiny to engage with Cabinet Members on a regular and structured basis.

2. Reporting of Letters

- 2.1 All scrutiny letters, whether they are written by the Scrutiny Programme Committee or conveners of panels / working groups, are published to ensure visibility, of the outcomes from meetings, across the council and public.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee agenda also includes a copy of letters to/from Cabinet Members where specific discussion is required, e.g. letters relating to the Committee, Working Groups, and Inquiry Panel follow ups. Letters are included when cabinet member responses that were awaited are received or where a scrutiny letter did not require a response.
- 2.3 Where requested Cabinet Members are expected to respond in writing to scrutiny letters within 21 calendar days. The response should indicate what action (if any) they intend to take as a result of the views and recommendations made.
- 2.4 Letters relating to the work of Performance Panels are part of an ongoing dialogue with Cabinet Members and are therefore reported back and monitored by each Panel. The exception to this is the Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel, whose letters will also be reported as this Committee is the designated committee for scrutinising Swansea Public Services Board (for the purposes of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015). However all Performance Panel conveners will provide a progress report to the committee, including summary of correspondence with Cabinet Members and outcomes.

3. Letters Log

- 3.1 This report contains a log of scrutiny letters produced to enable the committee to maintain an overview of letters activity over the year – see **Appendix 1**. The letters log also shows the average time taken by Cabinet Members to respond to scrutiny letters, and the percentage of letters responded to within timescale.
- 3.2 The following letter(s) are also **attached** for discussion:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Community Cohesion Working Group	20 Jun	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Better Communities (People)
b	Tackling Poverty Inquiry Follow Up	15 Oct	Letter to Cabinet Member for Better Communities (People)

3.3 Key Points:

- 3.3.1 Community Cohesion Working Group - The Working Group on 20 June enabled information and discussion / questions about the council's work to support and promote community cohesion and tackle issues and effectiveness, and consider the current situation.

The Cabinet Member's response confirms action that will be taken against each of the scrutiny recommendations, including action on:

- Developing a stronger role for Councillors and Local Area Co-ordinators in mainstreaming community cohesion.
- Myth busting information being made available online and shared via social media.
- Better links with and information to Governing Bodies, so they can have a direct impact on community cohesion in Swansea schools.
- Making more use of local media including using corporate communications to get more good news stories and myth busting out into local community.

- 3.3.2 Tackling Poverty Inquiry Follow Up - The Inquiry Panel considered progress against agreed recommendations and impact of its work. This work had focussed on ways in which the Council could improve its Tackling Poverty Strategy.

The Panel heard that the inquiry and its recommendations:

- has supported raising the profile of the tackling poverty agenda as everyone's business, and improved understanding and awareness
- has provided the role of a critical friend, supporting and reaffirming the direction of travel that the development of the revised Tackling Poverty Strategy took
- engaged a number of partners and organisations including The Bevan Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Leeds Truth Commission, whose input has proved useful in the development of the revised plan.

The Panel was pleased that good progress has been made with the delivery of actions against most of the scrutiny recommendations, although made some observations about work still in progress. However, the Panel agreed that the formal monitoring of the inquiry is now complete.

4. **Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications.

5. **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Letters Log

Appendix 2: Correspondence between scrutiny and cabinet members