



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 10 December 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 and Monitoring Officer
Report Author:	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer:	Paul Cridland

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 **attached** for discussion:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Committee (Q & A Session)	10 Sep	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Business Transformation & Performance (Deputy Leader)
b	Local Flood Risk Management Working Group	8 Oct	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management

c	Committee (Q & A Session)	8 Oct	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills
d	Air & Noise Pollution Working Group	6 Nov	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management
e	Committee (pre-decision scrutiny Homelessness Strategy & Action Plan 2018-2022)	12 Nov	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy

3.3 Key Points:

3.3.1 Local Flood Risk Management Working Group - The Working Group on 8 October was an extra meeting (in addition to agreed annual monitoring) to monitor progress on the recommendations made by the Group following its meeting earlier this year (20 February).

Conclusions:

- Pleased that progress has been made on its recommendations from the meeting held in February 2018 including the publication of an updated flood risk leaflet and provision of information on watercourses and gullies to councillors.
- There is a huge opportunity for the Authority to encourage strategic planting in new developments and the Working Group would like to see the Authority take advantage of this.
- Working Group would like to see the Authority use more nature based solutions to flood risk and recommends this opportunity is explored further.
- The Authority should look in to whether it can legislate on use of non-permeable materials in domestic gardens.
- Working Group would like an update at its next meeting on the proposals to employ four new members of staff for the delivery of SuDS
- Working Group would like confirmation at its next meeting that a section titled 'Help us prevent flooding' has been added to the webpages.
- Working Group would like to see a consistent approach to maintenance of water courses and gullies across the Authority.
- Working Group will meet again in 4 to 6 months for its annual update on Local Flood Risk Management.

The Cabinet Member's response confirms the action that will be taken including the following:

- With the new Biodiversity Policy, the Authority will be looking at that to ensure that all developments consider planting to enhance our

natural environment, and mitigate flooding issues. The Implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act will also ensure that 'greener solutions' to flood risk management will be maximized as part of any new development.

- Looking into whether or not the Authority can legislate on the use of non-permeable materials in domestic gardens.
- Providing an update at the next meeting on the position with the Department's ambition to employ four new members of staff for the delivery of SuDS as part of the Authority's new statutory duty to create a SAB approving body.
- Continuing to look into developing a consistent approach to the maintenance of water courses and gullies across the Authority, with work to be undertaken to ascertain departmental asset ownership and to explore the existing maintenance regimes on assets significant to flood risk.

3.3.2 Q & A Session with Cllr Jennifer Raynor – Committee should note the Cabinet Member's response letter regarding the Committee's request for her to communicate with governing bodies about reducing the health risk caused by vehicle exhaust emissions around schools and asking them to cascade the message in their communities. The Cabinet Member invites the Committee to give its views on the possible action that could be taken, as described in her letter.

3.3.3 Air & Noise Pollution Working Group – the convener of the Working Group, Councillor Joe Hale, will be invited to address the Committee on the views of the Working Group which looked at the information available, the effects of air/noise pollution including how pollution is measured/monitored and the efforts taking place to tackle problems faced. As a result of concerns/issues raised with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure Management, action will include the following:

- The Councils is working with Academic and Health colleagues to complete specific air quality research projects aimed at engaging members of the public and achieving compliance with objective concentrations and reducing exposure to pollutants.
- The Out of Hours Noise Control Service will continue to be assessed and seek efficiencies during times of austerity to enable continued delivery of this service.
- The Councils is currently looking at ways to reinvigorate the presentation of data on the Councils air pollution webpages and are working with ICT service to redesign the site in order to engage the public in its content, including integrating the Nowcaster System within the site.
- The Air Quality Action Plan is intending to investigate pollution around schools and behaviour of parents when bringing their children to school, with the aim of creating and testing an 'intervention', in collaboration with schools and active travel

coordinators, to enable behavioural change and the reduction in pollutant concentrations.

- The Council is working with colleagues in the School of Management and Life Science in Swansea University to investigate several themes around air quality and public health.

In addition the Committee should note that the Working Group have suggested that it meets annually, on the same basis as the Local Flood Risk Management Working Group. The Committee should consider this request. If the Committee agrees then it should be aware that this will impact on the number of new Working Group topics that can be looked at each year.

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