

Progress Report – Current Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups

1. Inquiry Panels:

These will undertake in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis, and will be expected to take around six months to complete to enable wide-ranging evidence gathering, and production of a final report with conclusions and recommendations for Cabinet (and other decision-makers).

a) **Equalities** (convener: Cllr Louise Gibbard)

Key Question: How effectively is the Council meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Duty for Wales)?

Progress Bar:

Planning				Evidence Gathering				Draft Final Report			

The final report produced by the Inquiry Panel was approved for submission to Cabinet by the Committee on 8 July, for decision. The report is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet on 19 September. Ahead of that a number of accessible versions of the scrutiny report are being prepared, including easy read, young persons, plain text and Welsh.

Projected End Date: Complete

b) **Procurement** (convener: Cllr Chris Holley)

Key Question: tbc

Progress Bar:

Planning				Evidence Gathering				Draft Final Report			

The first stage will be for a ‘pre-inquiry’ meeting which has been arranged for the 24 October this will involve an overview / briefing on the subject matter, with advice from relevant cabinet members / officers and existing research & information. This will help inform decisions about how scrutiny can contribute to improvement and the focus, scale and direction of any inquiry. If the Panel agrees an inquiry should be undertaken then it will then need to put together appropriate Terms of Reference for this work that may explore for example:

- effectiveness of process & strategy
- value for money / social value
- benefits to local economy

- impact of local procurement on regeneration / jobs
- financial savings to the Council
- collaboration

The inquiry will be expected to take up to six months to complete, as it will call for wide ranging evidence, and will lead to a report with conclusions and recommendations that will be presented to Cabinet.

2. Follow Up on Completed Inquiries:

Follow-ups of inquiries will consider both the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and wider impact / difference made. Inquiry Panels are reconvened between 6-12 months after cabinet decision on Inquiry reports.

Inquiry	Cabinet Decision	Recommendations			Follow Up Panel Meeting
		Agreed	Partly	Rejected	
Regional Working	16 Aug 2018	11	0	0	16 Oct 2019
Natural Environment*	18 Jul 2019	18	0	2	tbc

*this inquiry will be followed up within the work of the new Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel

3. Performance Panels:

Performance Panels enable regular and structured in-depth monitoring of performance and challenge within these key areas:

a) **Service Improvement & Finance** (convener: Cllr Chris Holley)

This Panel meets every month. The recent meeting on 19 August looked at the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report 18/19 and Q1 Budget Monitoring 18/19, Revenue and Outturn Reports and the Savings Tracker. The Panel are closely monitoring the budget and its impact on performance. The next meeting in September will focus on Charges and Archives.

b) **Education** (convener: Cllr Lyndon Jones)

This Panel meets every month. In July, they visited Dylan Thomas Community Comprehensive School to look at good practice at the school in relation to how they improve the wellbeing of pupils in order to improve attainment. They will next meet on the 12 September where they will discuss the Elective Home Education and the item referred from the Scrutiny Programme Committee performance of free school meal pupils.

c) **Adult Services** (convener: Cllr Peter Black)

This Panel meets every month. A progress report appears separately in the agenda as Item No. 7.

d) **Child & Family Services** (convener: Cllr Paxton Hood-Williams)

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel met on 28 August and discussed Performance Monitoring, received an update on the action plan following the CIW Inspection Report and discussed the CIW Local Authority Performance Review and Letter. Its next meeting is on 28 October when it will receive a briefing on the Youth Offending Service, an update on progress with CAMHS and an update on the report to WG on Safe Looked After Children Reduction Strategy.

e) **Development & Regeneration** (convener: Cllr Jeff Jones)

This Panel meets every two months. On 17 July the Panel met to review the Wales Audit Office Report 'Local Government Services to Rural Communities'. The Panel wrote to the Cabinet Member and Ministers Ken Skates and Lesley Griffiths raising their concerns over lack of Broadband in rural areas and a successor to the Rural Development Programme with ends in 2020.

The recent meeting on 31 July had the usual dashboard update and provided the Panel with progress on these projects. There was also an update from Cabinet Member Mark Thomas and Stuart Davies Head of Highways and Transportation on Transport projects. The Panel have written to relevant Cabinet Members with their thoughts.

f) **Natural Environment** (convener: tbc)

This Panel will meet quarterly. The first meeting is scheduled for 25 September and will have an overview of the Councils current commitments in relation to the Natural Environment. The Panel will also elect their Convener and discuss the work plan.

g) **Public Services Board** (convener: Cllr Mary Jones)

This Panel will meet twice yearly. The Public Services Board Panel last met to discuss the new Governance Structure which has been put in place consider the Annual Review. The Panel will look forward to seeing the new action plans and more evidence of outcomes in future meetings.

4. Regional Scrutiny:

This is collaborative scrutiny with other Local Authorities for topics / issues of shared interest or concern, and models of regional working.

a) Education Through Regional Working

The Scrutiny Councillor Group will meet on the 23 September 2019 to:

- Discuss progress with reform programme and meeting the national mission with the Lead Chief Executive Phil Roberts
- Discuss the costed ERW business plan
- Speak to the ERW Lead for Digital Learning Systems
- Speak to the ERW Lead for Health and Wellbeing

They will move from 2 to 4 meetings a year to coincide with school terms and the dates of the ERW Joint Committee meetings.

b) Swansea Bay City Region

The Joint Scrutiny Committee meets on 2 September at the Civic Centre, Neath. The Committee will also have a site visit to the Homes as Power Stations (HAPs) Project.

In recent meetings the Joint Scrutiny Committee has discussed progress in relation to the various reviews that have been carried out, and financial and governance arrangements for the City Deal.

The Committee will meet in the following dates during 2019/20: 28 October; 15 January; 9 March and 6 May.

5. Working Groups:

a) Tourism (convener: Cllr Peter Jones)

The convener of the Working Group presented a report to Cabinet, on 18 July, which reflected on the Working Group meeting in May. A number of recommendations have been made by the Working Group, and a Cabinet response is awaited.

NEW TOPICS:

A number of new topics have been identified which will be dealt with through one-off Working Groups. These enable a 'light-touch' approach to specific topics of concern and will be planned as a one-off meeting (in the order shown below) primarily involving discussion with relevant cabinet member(s) / officer(s), and any other persons called, to gather information, ask questions, and give views / raise any concerns.

a) **Brexit** (convener: Cllr Peter Jones)

This Working Group will be held on 23 September. It will enable information, questions and discussion about Council preparedness and resilience; how this is being discussed; what plans / contingencies are being put in place given possible impact, relationship with Wales / UK Government, etc.

b) **Staff Health & Well-being** (convener: Cllr Cyril Anderson)

This will enable information, questions and discussion on how the Council supports members of staff; issues around staff sickness; pressures, etc.

c) **Road Safety** (convener: Steve Gallagher)

This will enable information, questions and discussion on hot spots; work to improve safety; preventative measures; speed controls; safety of cycling routes; partnership working, etc.

d) **Digital Inclusion** (convener: Cllr Lesley Walton)

This will enable councillors to follow up on the Working Group meeting originally held in March 2017. At that meeting the Working Group detailed a number of issues to be considered as part of a review of the Council's digital inclusion strategy. Councillors will be able to have a discussion around digital transformation, the Council's digital inclusion strategy, and how well prepared both the Council and the public is to use and communicate / engage via digital technology to avoid exclusion / poor access)