



## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 11 November 2019

## Scrutiny Letters

<b>Purpose:</b>	To ensure the Committee is aware of the scrutiny letters produced following various scrutiny activities, and to track responses to date.
<b>Content:</b>	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.
<b>Councillors are being asked to:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the scrutiny letters and responses</li><li>• Make comments, observations and recommendations as necessary</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor:</b>	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
<b>Report Author:</b>	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: <a href="mailto:brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk">brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk</a>
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Debbie Smith
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	Amanda Thomas

### 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)	12 Aug	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Resilience & Strategic Collaboration (formerly Business Transformation & Performance)
b	Committee (Pre-decision scrutiny – Enterprise Resource	9 Sep	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Resilience & Strategic Collaboration

	Planning System)		(formerly Business Transformation & Performance)
c	Committee (Q & A Session)	9 Sep	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Services Transformation (formerly Homes & Energy)
d	Brexit Working Group	23 Sep	Letter to / from Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Economy and Strategy

### 3.3 Key Points:

- 3.3.1 Brexit Working Group (convener Cllr Peter Jones) - A meeting of the Working Group was held on 23 September. The Panel discussed the Council's preparations for Brexit and resilience, and heard from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Rob Stewart, the Deputy Chief Executive, and a number of officers represented on the Council's Brexit Steering Group.

The Working Group was satisfied that the Council is as prepared as it can be, and working closely with the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association. Members however shared some concerns and issues for the Council to consider, e.g. the need to ensure clear messages to the public to address any misunderstand about impacts, and avoid any anxiety such as panic buying (food, fuel, medicines etc), uncertainty around funding support for Councils to prepare for Brexit, and potential opportunities that Brexit may present e.g. for the port of Swansea.

Whilst it is still unknown when Brexit will happen and what form it will take the Working Group recommends to the Committee to that a follow up meeting of the Working Group is held post Brexit, when the impact(s) is likely to be clearer. **The Committee should consider this request.**

## 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