



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 13 January 2020

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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Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
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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 **attached** for discussion:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Committee (Q & A Session)	14 Oct	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills
b	Regional Inquiry Follow Up	15 Oct	Letter to Cabinet Member for Economy & Strategy (Leader)
c	Committee (Pre-decision scrutiny – Housing)	18 Nov	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Services Transformation

	Commissioning Review)		
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3.3 Key Points:

- 3.3.1 Regional Working Inquiry Follow Up (convener Cllr Lyndon Jones) - A meeting of the Inquiry Panel was held on 15 October to follow up on the implementation of recommendations that were agreed by Cabinet and assess the impact of this scrutiny.

Since the inquiry concluded in 2018, there has been some movement in relation to regional working in Wales. This includes clearer details from Welsh Government on proposals for improved collaboration and the operation of Joint Committees. In addition, the WLGA have been involved in detailed discussions with Welsh Government and a Wales Bill detailing these and other changes is now imminent. The Panel heard that the Chief Executive has been holding informal discussions with the Minister and with senior civil servants with a view to preparing a regional proposition, with preference for a four council footprint in South West Wales as a basis for future partnership arrangements – Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.

The Panel were pleased that the inquiry had helped to raise the profile of regional working and has informed and began to provide clarity on the Council's approach to regional collaboration.

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