

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

Key Question: What is the Council doing to ensure it procures locally, ethically, and greenly while being cost effective and transparent in its practices?

Progress Bar:

Planning				Evidence Gathering				Draft Final Report			

The Procurement Pre-Inquiry Working Group met on the 24 October and involved an overview / briefing on the subject matter. This helped Councillors to be informed about how scrutiny can contribute to improvement and the focus, scale and direction of any inquiry. The Panel agreed to undertake an inquiry and the Terms of Reference were discussed. The inquiry work is on hold pending recruitment of Scrutiny Officer but will start evidence gathering as soon as possible and this could 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 may 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	15 Oct 2019 COMPLETE
Natural Environment*	18 Jul 2019	18	0	2	tbc
Equalities	21 Nov 2019	18	0	0	tba July 2020

*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)

The Panel meets every month. In January, the Panel looked at the 2nd Quarter Performance Monitoring and the Draft Budget Proposals. At their next meeting on the 19 February, they will carry out pre-decision Scrutiny on the Annual Budget papers that are going to Cabinet on the 20 February.

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

This Panel meets every month. In January, they discussed the Annual Education Performance Data including data on educational outcomes of Looked After Children. They will meet twice in February, firstly on 13th to look at School Transport and the progress with the 21st Century Schools Programme and secondly on the 18th, to look at the Annual Budget as it relates to education matters.

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 18 December and received an update on the Regional Adoption Service, the Corporate Parenting Board and Performance Monitoring. There will be

an extra meeting on 18 February to discuss the draft budget proposals. and the next scheduled meeting is on 24 February and will discuss Carers Assessments, progress on Child and Family Improvement Programme and Safeguarding.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The last meeting on 27 January received the usual project update 'dashboard' report, a presentation on the Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme and a presentation on the Digital Village. There will be an additional meeting on 18 February to discuss the draft budget proposals. The next scheduled meeting is on 23 March and as well as the usual 'Dashboard' Report Swansea Vale Development projects will be discussed.

f) **Natural Environment** (convener: Cllr Peter Jones)

This Panel meets quarterly. The last Panel meeting on 16 December focussed on Weed Management, and Air Pollution Control. The next meeting in March (date tbc) will focus on Local Flood Risk Management and follow up on the implementation of recommendations from the Natural Environment Inquiry that were agreed by Cabinet in July 2019.

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

This Panel meets twice yearly. The Panel will focus on action plans associated with Public Services Board objectives, progress and outcomes. The next meeting will take place on 5 February to focus on the Early Years and Live Well, Age Well objectives, hearing from Council and Local Health Board leads.

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 met on 27 January 2020, hosted by Powys Council. They

- met with the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee and the Lead Director to discuss progress with reform programme and meeting the national mission for education
- discussed the costed ERW business plan
- spoke to the ERW Lead for Secondary Curriculum and Examinations
- spoke to the ERW Lead for Research and Higher Education Partnerships.

The next meeting takes place on 4 May.

b) **Swansea Bay City Region**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee met on 15 January in Pembroke to continue its City Deal Programme monitoring. As well as programme monitoring, there was specific discussion on local projects for Carmarthenshire and the Regional Digital Infrastructure Project, and a discussion on Terms and Conditions from UK and Welsh Governments on the release of monies.

The Committee will meet again on 9 March.

5. **Working Groups:**

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 met on 23 September to 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. A letter was sent to the Cabinet Member for Economy & Strategy with the thoughts of the Working Group and a response received – reported to the Committee in November. This issue is being kept in the work programme with a further meeting of the Working Group anticipated post Brexit, when the impact(s) should be clearer.

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)