



## Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Audit Committee – 11 February 2020

### For Information: Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-20

<b>Purpose:</b>	<p>This report supports the developing relationship between scrutiny and the Audit Committee and sharing of information. It explains the background and purpose of the scrutiny work programme, which is developed, managed and monitored by the Scrutiny Programme Committee.</p> <p>The report shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the overall agreed Scrutiny Work Programme, including work being carried out through various Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups established by the Committee;</li><li>• the work plan of the Scrutiny Programme Committee itself;</li><li>• the work plan of the Service Improvement &amp; Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel and</li><li>• the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018-19 which was reported to Council on 24 October 2019.</li></ul>
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Constitution
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal, Finance and Access to Services
<b>Recommendation:</b>	The Committee is invited to make comments as necessary in support of the relationship between scrutiny and the Audit Committee.
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## **1. Developing the Relationship between Scrutiny and the Audit Committee.**

1.1 It has been previously identified and agreed that there is a need for:

- Mutual awareness and understanding of the work of scrutiny and audit committee
- Respective work plans to be coordinated and avoid duplication / gaps
- Clear mechanism for referral of issues, if necessary

1.2 In support of this the following actions were agreed in 2015-16:

- i) Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee / Convener of Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel copied into Audit Committee agenda and vice versa
- ii) Scrutiny Work Programme / Service Improvement & Finance Panel Work Plan published in Audit Committee agenda for information and vice versa
- iii) At least once a year chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee appears at Audit Committee to share work plan and for a 'health-check' and vice-versa
- iv) Audit Committee chair invited to Annual Scrutiny Work Planning Conference
- v) Chairs raise any issues re. coordination / duplication on ongoing basis
- vi) Where matters to be referred from Audit Committee chair writes letter to chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee

1.3. In terms of strengthening links between scrutiny and audit / inspectors / regulators, the Scrutiny Programme Committee and/or relevant Scrutiny Performance Panels routinely consider any such external reports published (e.g. from Wales Audit Office; Estyn; Care Inspectorate Wales) and the Council's response to recommendations and action plans, with follow up as necessary. Recommendations will be tracked and monitored by scrutiny, and the degree of involvement will of course depend on the level of concern and importance around the issues raised by external audit / inspectors / regulators, given limited time and resources.

## **2. The Scrutiny Work Programme**

2.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing the Council's scrutiny work programme, and managing the overall work of scrutiny to ensure that it is as effective as possible.

## 2.2 The broad aim of the scrutiny function is:

To carry out a significant and constructive programme of activities that will:

- help improve services;
- provide an effective challenge to the executive;
- engage members in the development of policies, strategies and plans; and
- engage the public.

## 2.3 At the same time the committee must ensure that the work of scrutiny is:

- manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available
- relevant to corporate priorities
- adding value and having maximum impact
- coordinated and avoids duplication

## 2.4 The Scrutiny Work Programme is guided by the overriding principle that the work of scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of scrutiny time and resources. A Work Planning Conference takes place each year, at which all non-executive councillors are invited, to guide the focus of the scrutiny work programme, and is taken into account by the Scrutiny Programme Committee in agreeing the work programme.

## 3. **Methods of Working**

### 3.1 The work of scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the committee itself and by establishing informal panels (for in-depth activities) or one-off working groups:

a) **Formal committee meetings** – as well as developing and managing the overall work programme and keeping an oversight on all scrutiny activities, the committee will focus on holding Cabinet Members to account by holding formal questioning sessions, and provide challenge on a broad range of policy and service issues over the course of the year. Matters considered at committee meetings will typically be ‘one-off’ opportunities for questions, which will result in the committee communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement through chairs letters to Cabinet Members, and where appropriate by producing reports.

- **Informal panels** – Scrutiny panels are established, with conveners and members appointed by the committee, to carry out in-depth inquiries or undertake in-depth monitoring of particular services. The use of panels helps to ensure that scrutiny can be flexible and responsive to issues of concern:

i) Inquiry Panels: to undertake discrete in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis. These would be significant topics where scrutiny can make a real difference. Inquiry panels are expected to take no longer than six months to complete and will produce a final report at the end of the inquiry with conclusions and recommendations for Cabinet (and other decision-makers), informed by the evidence gathered.

Inquiry Panels will reconvene to follow up on implementation of agreed recommendations and cabinet action plans, and the impact of their work – usually 6-12 months following cabinet decision, with a further follow up arranged if required.

ii) Performance Panels: to provide in-depth monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas. Performance panels are expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant cabinet members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, about services.

b) ***Informal working groups*** – although the majority of scrutiny work is carried out through the Committee and Panels, the Committee can also establish informal Working Groups of councillors. This supports flexible working and this method of working is intended to be light-touch – effectively a one-off meeting to consider a specific report or information, resulting in a letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s) with views and recommendations, or report to Cabinet as deemed necessary.

3.2 These arrangements help to achieve more focused scrutiny activity and provide flexibility to deal with things in different ways, depending on the issue, and improve impact.

3.3 Non executive councillors who are not members of the committee have the opportunity to participate in panels and other informal task and finish groups. New panel / working group topics, once agreed, are advertised to all non executive councillors and expressions of interest sought. The membership of panels and working groups is then determined by the committee. More than one political group should be represented on each panel / working groups. These bodies also need to be of a manageable size in terms of team working and effective questioning. A minimum of 3 members should be present at all meetings.

3.4 Although much of the work of scrutiny is carried out by informal Panels and Working Groups these meetings are accessible to the public. Agendas, reports, letters relating to all such scrutiny activities will be published, in the same manner as the committee, on the Council's modern.gov online platform:

<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

3.5 The following information is appended:

- the overall agreed Scrutiny Work Programme, including work being carried out through various Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups established by the Committee (**Appendix 1**)
- the work plan of the Scrutiny Programme Committee itself (**Appendix 2**)
- the work plan of the Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel (**Appendix 3**)
- Scrutiny Annual Report 2018-19 (**Appendix 4**)

#### **4. Monitoring the Work Programme**

4.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee maintain an overview of all scrutiny activities to ensure that the work programme is co-ordinated and effective. In particular the committee monitors progress of work undertaken by the informal Panels and Working Groups and findings to ensure that this work is effective and has the required visibility. Performance Panel conveners provide regular updates on their work which enables discussion on key activities and impact.

#### **5. Scrutiny Annual Report 2018-19**

5.1 Every year Council requires that an annual report is produced for the work of scrutiny for the previous municipal year.

5.2 The Scrutiny Annual Report is used to:

- Highlight the work carried out by scrutiny
- Show how scrutiny has made a difference
- Support continuous improvement for the scrutiny function

5.3 The Annual Report looking back at 2018-19 was presented to Council on 24 October 2019 for discussion. This report can be found as **Appendix 4**

5.4 The report takes a 'results based' approach, to show:

- How much scrutiny we did
- How well we did
- How much scrutiny affected the business of the Council
- The outcomes of scrutiny

#### **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 Any costs that arise out of work plan activities, for example expenses for witnesses or transport costs, are not envisaged to be significant and will be contained within the existing Scrutiny Budget.

## **7. Legal Implications**

7.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

## **8. Equality & Engagement Implications**

8.1 There are no specific equality and engagement implications raised by this report.

**Background papers:** None

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Agreed Scrutiny Work Programme 2019-20

Appendix 2: The Committee Work Plan 2019-20

Appendix 3: Service Improvement & Finance Panel Work Plan 2019-20

Appendix 4: Scrutiny Annual Report 2018-19