



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel - Natural Environment**

Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 16 December 2019 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor P K Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
C Richards
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)
M H Jones
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)
I E Mann
M Sherwood

Other Councillor Attendees:

Mark Thomas Cabinet Member – Environment & Infrastructure Management

Officer(s):

Bob Fenwick	Group Leader Highways Maintenance
Jeremy Davies	Group Leader Parks and Cleansing
Mark Wade	Head of Housing & Public Health
Tom Price	Team Leader – Pollution Control & Private Sector Housing
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader

Other Invitees:

Dr Rosemary Mason

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J A Hale and L J Tyler-Lloyd

14 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

15 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

16 Minutes.

The minutes of the Natural Environment Scrutiny Performance Panel meetings, held on 25 September 2019 and 22 October 2019, were agreed as an accurate record.

17 Public Questions.

There were no public questions.

18 Weed Management.

The Panel held a discussion on weed management, in particular on the Council's use of glyphosate, which has been the subject of public debate regarding health & safety.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management, along with relevant officers, reported to the Panel on the Council's approach and activities in relation to weed management and control, use of glyphosate, and challenges in identifying alternatives.

The Panel also heard from an external contributor, Dr. Rosemary Mason, who has campaigned against the use of glyphosate. She shared with the Panel her concerns regarding glyphosate use and dangerous impacts on human health and biodiversity.

Discussion focussed on:

- Highways weed spraying activity, resources and costs
- The Parks Service (including treatment of Japanese knotweed)
- The licensing of glyphosate
- Health concerns
- Welsh Government and APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) guidance
- Public opinion on weed management
- Alternatives to using glyphosate

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the way forward. The Chair thanked all for their input.

AGREED that the Panel write to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management with its views and recommendations on the issue of weed management.

19 Air Pollution Control.

The Panel held a discussion on air pollution control, as a serious public health issue, which has previously been the subject of a Scrutiny Working Group and will now be subject of regular monitoring of performance through this Scrutiny Panel.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management, along with relevant officers, reported to the Panel on air pollution monitoring activities in Swansea, and actions to improve air quality.

The Panel also considered the 'Local Air Quality Management In Wales' Welsh Government Policy Guidance (issued June 2017) which provided a reference point for discussion on how the Council is working to improve air quality, human health, and the quality of life in Swansea.

Discussion focussed on:

- Air quality monitoring and compliance with National Air Quality Standards
- Measured levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), including monitoring around schools
- The contribution of traffic congestion on levels of both air and noise pollution
- The issue of contracted vehicles (coaches / taxis etc.) and parents / carers parked outside schools with engines left running and impact on children's health
- The car culture, quality of public transport, and increase in housebuilding
- Electric vehicle usage
- How industry in Swansea and the region contributes to air pollution, and the inspection and monitoring regime in place
- Correlation between air pollution and deprivation / health inequalities
- The importance of green infrastructure in helping to reduce the harmful effects of air and noise pollution
- The Council's Air Quality Action Plan
- Actions taken to improve air quality and reducing exposure to air pollution
- Public engagement and messaging on air quality
- Opportunities arising from the UK Clean Air Day on 18 June 2020, the UK's largest air pollution campaign
- The Welsh Government Active Travel Grant Fund
- The Council's position with regard to the Welsh Government Policy Guidance
- The Welsh Government Clean Air Plan for Wales, and approach to reducing air pollution in Wales, being out for consultation ending on 10 March 2020

The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the way forward. The Chair thanked all for their input.

AGREED that the Panel write to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management with its views and recommendations on the issue of air pollution control.

20 Letters.

The Panel received the correspondence sent by the Panel and responses received following the meeting of the Panel held on 25 September 2019:

- Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Delivery & Performance.
- Letter to / from Welsh Government Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs
- Correspondence with Cabinet Member for Education Improvement, Learning & Skills

21 Work Plan 2019/20.

The Panel's work plan for this municipal year was noted. The monitoring items for the next Panel meeting, to be arranged for March 2020, were shown as:

- Follow Up – Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry
- Local Flood Risk Management

22 For Information: Environment (Wales) Act 2016 - First Section 6 Biodiversity Duty Monitoring Report to Welsh Government

The report was noted.

The meeting ended at 12.32 pm

Chair