



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 15 September 2020 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
J A Hale
P K Jones
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
D W Helliwell
W G Lewis
T M White

Councillor(s)

L S Gibbard
T J Hennegan
G J Tanner

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas A Roberts

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley L R Jones
P R Hood-Williams J W Jones

Officer(s)

Kate Jones Democratic Services Officer
Brij Madahar Scrutiny Team Leader
Stephanie Williams Principal Lawyer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): E T Kirchner

151 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

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

152 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.

153 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 25 August 2020 be approved as a correct record.

154 Public Question Time.

There were no public questions.

155 Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Review 2019/20.

The Scrutiny Team Leader presented a report on 'Annual Scrutiny Work Programme Review 2019/20'.

He encouraged, as good practice, the Committee to look back on the year's work and consider its effectiveness. The report was intended to facilitate the discussion about work carried out, reflections, and share ideas about improving practice and the work programme. The report highlighted the impact that resources and COVID-19 had on the delivery of the work programme this year.

The Scrutiny Team Leader highlighted the following areas:

- 1) Summary of Work Completed
 - The work carried out by the Scrutiny Programme Committee, through Inquiry Panel, Performance Panels and Working Groups, against the agreed scrutiny work programme 2019/20
 - Public involvement and media coverage
- 2) The Scrutiny Experience
 - Relevant statistics regarding scrutiny activity
 - Wales Audit Office's good practice paper on 'Six Steps to Better Scrutiny in Wales'
 - Progress against the Committee's scrutiny improvement objectives, including actions in response to the Wales Audit Office Review of Scrutiny in 2018
- 3) Developing the Future Work Programme
 - Activities to be carried over
 - Outstanding topics for consideration
 - Request from members for pre-decision scrutiny on an upcoming cabinet report on the relocation of Civic Centre to a new Public Sector Hub
 - Proposal for a Work Planning Conference on 13 October 2020 in place of the scheduled Scrutiny Programme Committee
 - Development of a work programme for the next 18 months

The main points arising from a discussion on future work and improvement & development issues included the following:

- Important that the focus of Performance Panels / work plans are reviewed. It was recognised that Scrutiny Officers will discuss with Panel conveners as new Panel work plans are drawn up to ensure they are effective, represent best use of time and resources, and meaningful, so that Panels can make an impact / difference.
- Performance Panel work plans, when available, should be reported to the Committee to improve Committee oversight of topics being examined, check

coverage across cabinet portfolios, and help avoid duplication of effort between the Committee and Panels and between Panels etc.

- There were reflections on and acknowledgement of positive external assessments of Swansea's scrutiny arrangements and practice.
- The need for flexibility in the work programme to focus on the most pressing issues e.g. COVID, Brexit.
- The importance of research support to scrutiny.
- Although there is good structured follow up for Inquiries, there should be more time to follow up on other recommendations, particularly from Working Groups.
- The potential for more reports to Cabinet, instead of letters, following Working Groups - which will result in more formal recommendations requiring formal response.
- A desire for discussion on the Homelessness Strategy, one year on from cabinet approval, at a future Committee meeting.
- The Committee was content with progress against scrutiny improvement objectives – noting a small number of outstanding actions – and Committee will give thought to other improvement objectives for the future and/or new actions that will help deliver already identified objectives

The Chair and Committee thanked the Scrutiny Team for their support and work, on behalf of scrutiny councillors, coping with staff shortages over the past year, supporting the Council throughout the pandemic, and getting scrutiny activity re-started.

Resolved that a remote Work Planning Conference, for all scrutiny councillors, be held on the 13 October 2020 in place of the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

156 Future Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan

The Chair presented the report on 'Future Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan' and highlighted three key proposals, involving some adjustment to the Committee Work Plan, and way of working, in order to create capacity in the overall work programme for scrutiny activity:

- Consider moving away from routine monthly Cabinet Member Q& A sessions to create space to pick up on specific issues of concern;
- Carry out scrutiny of the Public Services Board via Committee Meetings instead of via standalone Performance Panel.
- Change the frequency of the Adult Services (from monthly) & Child & Family Services Performance Panels (from every two months) – moving to a 6-weekly cycle, overall representing a neutral change in terms of officer support.

It was also proposed that the frequency of the Natural Environment Performance Panel be increased to bi-monthly.

Resolved that:

- 1) The Scrutiny Programme Committee move away from routine monthly Cabinet Member Q & A sessions to a more targeted approach, focussed on issues of concern;
- 2) The Scrutiny Programme Committee carry out scrutiny of the Public Services Board instead of via a standalone Performance Panel - partner representatives who were co-opted on the Panel to be co-opted to the Committee for specific Committee Public Services Board scrutiny sessions.
- 3) The frequency of the Adult Services & Child & Family Services Performance Panels be amended so that both panels have a 6-weekly cycle; and
- 4) The frequency of the Natural Environment Performance Panel be increased in principle, from quarterly to every two months, subject to agreement of the overall scrutiny work programme.

The meeting ended at 4.50 pm

Chair