

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 Panel continued their meetings with individual Council Departments with Social Services on 13 September and Education and the Corporate Centre on 27 September. They will now meet on 20 October for a roundtable meeting with a group of Contractors/Stakeholders.

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	
Equalities	21 Nov 2019	18	0	0	28 Jan 2021 Further follow up: 2 Nov 2021

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)

This Panel meets every month. The Panel last met on 20 September to discuss the Q1 Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 and to receive an update regarding Peer Review & Self-Assessment (Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021).

The Panel will next meet on 19 October to discuss the Q1 2021/22 Performance Monitoring Report. At this meeting, the Panel will also receive an overview from the Chief Finance Officer about 'Understanding Financial Reporting', before discussing the Review of Reserves item.

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

This Panel meets every month. The Panel will at its next meeting on the 21 October discuss the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan and receive an update on progress with the New Curriculum for Wales.

At their meeting on the 18 November they will meet with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors from Morryston Comprehensive School.

c) **Adult Services** (convener: Cllr Susan Jones)

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. The Panel last met on 14 July and discussed the latest Performance Monitoring Report, received initial feedback on the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Assurance Visit in relation to Adult Services and agreed its work programme for 2021-22.

Due to Covid pressures the remaining work programme for this municipal year has been suspended. Remaining meetings will focus on performance monitoring (with a Covid focus) and updates on the management of Covid. However, at the next meeting on 20 October there will also be a briefing on the Workforce Support Programme.

d) **Child & Family Services** (convener: Cllr Paxton Hood-Williams)

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. A progress report appears separately under Agenda Item 9.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel last met on 7 September, when the Panel received a presentation from Swansea University in relation to their involvement with the City Deal investment projects. The Panel also heard updates from officers regarding the on-going projects across Swansea.

The Panel have recently visited the Arena for a site tour, viewing the interior of the Arena building, as well as the exterior parkland area and the bridge.

The Panel will next meet on 2 November to receive an update regarding the City Centre Travel Plan and continue to monitor development and regeneration activity supported by the regular Dashboard Report.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel last met on 6 October to receive updates regarding Local Flood Risk Management and Water Pollution policies. The Panel also received information from Natural Resources Wales' officers regarding water pollution management strategies.

This Panel will next meet on 12 January to discuss updates regarding Council Management of Green Space and Weed / Verge Management.

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 for the last time in its current form on the 28 June 2021. They met with the Lead Director and the ERW Chief Officers to discuss ERW and the move to the new Education Regional Partnership. They also discussed progress with the Business Plan and how they would like to see Scrutiny operate under the new Partnership.

The new South West Wales Education Partnership will commence shortly, and will include Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. The Governance Structure for the new body is currently being finalised and will go to each of the three Councils for discussion in autumn. The new scrutiny arrangement will form part of this Governance Structure.

b) **Swansea Bay City Region City**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee continues to monitor the City Deal programme. The Committee was due to meet on 27 September focussing on Digital Infrastructure, but was cancelled. As such, arrangements are being made for another meeting before the next scheduled meeting in November.

The Joint Committee is supported by Scrutiny Officers in Neath Port Talbot Council and agendas / minutes of meetings can be found on-line:

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=417>

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) **Workforce** (convener: Cllr Cyril Anderson)

This Working Group met on 29 March 2021 and asked about the impact of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of staff; how the Council is supporting this; issues around home working; staff sickness; staff turnover; use of agency staff and pressures. A range of information was considered by the Working Group, with input from relevant Cabinet Member(s) and officer(s). A letter with the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations was sent to the relevant Cabinet Members and this letter together with the Cabinet Members response was reported to the Committee in June.

With the Committee's agreement, the Working Group will meet again in the next six months in order to revisit the topic and consider the latest position, information and experience including the results of the further staff survey that will be carried out by the Council in the coming months.

b) **Digital Inclusion** (convener: Cllr Lesley Walton)

This Working Group met on the 11 May where they congratulated officers for the good work done so far in relation this, especially through the difficult Covid period. Overall the Working Group were of the view that the Council is on the right track with its Digital Inclusion Strategy and do recognise that the Council is keen to make the right improvements moving forward. The Digital Inclusion Framework/Strategy and the Council Website is currently being reviewed and members of the Working Group asked to be included in this process. The letter from the Working Group to the Cabinet Member

for Business Improvement & Performance was reported to the Committee in June.

The Working Group felt that further oversight of work on Digital Inclusion is necessary as things develop, perhaps annually, whether through Working Group or other method of scrutiny. This will be factored into future work planning discussion.

c) **Bus Services** (convener: Cllr Lyndon Jones)

This Working Group met on 7 July when a range of information was considered, including bus network coverage and levels of service, community transport provision and integration with other forms of transport. Relevant Cabinet Member and officers participated in the meeting together with representatives of First Cymru and Cardiff Bus.

A letter with the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations was sent to the relevant Cabinet Member and this letter together with the Cabinet Members response appears within the Committee agenda under Item 12 – Scrutiny Letters.

d) **Healthy City** (convener: Cllr Jennifer Raynor)

This will enable information, questions and discussion on Swansea as a healthy city, exploring in particular the provision, and promotion of, outdoor sport and activities and opportunities for young people, etc.

Due to Covid pressures this Working Group will no longer be held in this municipal year.

Reserve Working Group List:

- Road Safety
- Active Travel
- Accessibility for the Disabled / Elderly