



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 December 2021

Scrutiny Work Programme

Purpose	This report presents the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/22, which the Committee is responsible for monitoring.
Content	The agreed work programme is attached, which shows the topics that will be examined by scrutiny through various Panels and Working Groups. A plan for future Committee meetings is also attached. Progress against the agreed work programme is shown.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plan for the Committee meetings ahead• consider opportunities for Pre-decision Scrutiny• review the Scrutiny Work Programme (including progress of current Panels and Working Groups)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
Report Author	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer:	Paul Cridland

1. Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 A report is provided to each meeting to enable the Committee to maintain an overview of agreed scrutiny activities, monitor progress, and coordinate work as necessary.
- 1.3 The broad aim of the scrutiny function is to engage non-executive councillors in activities to:

- provide an effective challenge to the executive
- help improve services, policies, and performance
- engage the public in its work

1.4 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.

It also needs to be:

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

1.5 The work of scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the Committee itself, by establishing informal Panels (for in-depth activities) or via one-off Working Groups. Panels and Working Groups would be open to all non-executive councillors - the Committee will determine membership and conveners following expressions of interest.

1.6 Scrutiny will regularly send letters to Cabinet Members communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement and, where appropriate, by producing reports. Inquiry panels will always 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 the implementation of agreed recommendations and the impact of their work – usually 6-12 months following cabinet decision.

1.7 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 and letters relating to all such scrutiny activities are 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>

2. Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/22

2.1.1 The agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/22 is set out in **Appendix 1**.

2.1.2. The following paragraphs break down the work programme by specific ways of working to provide a brief overview.

2.2 Scrutiny Programme Committee:

- 2.2.1 The Committee's own work plan is attached as **Appendix 2**. This should be kept under review to ensure it represents a robust, manageable, and effective plan. As well as keeping an oversight on all scrutiny activities, the Committee plan covers a broad range of policy and service topics and aims to ensure coverage of scrutiny across all cabinet portfolios and address any gaps in the overall work programme. The Committee is also the designated Council Committee for scrutiny of the Public Services Board, and Crime & Disorder Scrutiny.
- 2.2.2 Committee members should review and confirm items for the next and future meetings giving specific consideration to who should attend so that meetings are always well planned and prepared for, e.g. information required and key questions that the Committee wishes to ask.
- 2.2.3 The main item(s) scheduled for the next Committee meeting on 18 January are:
- Q & A Session with the Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy, Councillor Rob Stewart.
 - Scrutiny of Public Services Board – this will include the PSB Annual Report 2020/21 and specific focus on the Council's contribution to the delivery of PSB Well-being Objectives.
- 2.2.4 The Committee will have the opportunity to review scrutiny priorities and introduce issues of concern as and when they arise, e.g. pre-decision scrutiny or call-in, which may require extra meetings.
- 2.2.5 Pre-decision Scrutiny – this is carried out by the Committee unless delegated elsewhere. The Committee is invited to consider the available information on future Cabinet business and any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny, taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications (see Cabinet Forward Plan attached as **Appendix 3**). Any requests will require discussion with relevant Cabinet Member(s) to confirm timescales and window of opportunity for scrutiny involvement. Pre-decision scrutiny enables scrutiny to develop understanding about and ask questions on proposed Cabinet reports to provide 'critical friend' challenge and influence decision-making.
- 2.2.6 The Committee Work Plan remains flexible and subject to change to accommodate requests for pre-decision scrutiny and any urgent issues arising during the year to ensure each meeting is manageable.

2.3 Inquiry Panels:

- 2.3.1 Once membership and a convener have been appointed the first task of an Inquiry Panel is to have a briefing on the issue and then determine the key question and terms of reference for the inquiry. Once the planning stage is complete, the inquiry will be evidence gathering, with the last stage being to develop the final report.

In Progress	Completed (follow up stage)
1. Procurement (drafting final report)	1. Equalities (followed up 28 Jan 2021 & further follow up 26 Jan 2022)

2.4 Performance Panels:

- 2.4.1 The following Performance Panels, which enable regular and structured monitoring of performance within these key areas, have been agreed and will meet on an ongoing basis until otherwise agreed by the Committee (frequency of meetings in brackets):

Performance Panel	Convener
1. Service Improvement & Finance (monthly)	Cllr. Chris Holley
2. Education (monthly)	Cllr. Lyndon Jones
3. Adult Services (every six weeks)	Cllr. Susan Jones
4. Child & Family Services (every six weeks)	Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams
5. Development & Regeneration (every two months)	Cllr. Jeff Jones
6. Natural Environment (every two months)	Cllr. Peter Jones

- 2.4.2 Performance Panel conveners are scheduled to provide a regular update to the Committee to enable discussion on key activities and impact.

2.5 Working Groups:

- 2.5.1 The following Working Groups are in the work programme. Dates of meetings already held, or planned for the year ahead:

1. Workforce (29 Mar 2021, further meeting 2 Feb 2022)	3. Bus Services (7 Jul 2021, further meeting tbc Mar 2022)
2. Digital Inclusion (11 May 2021)	

- 2.5.2 The Road Safety Working Group planned for February 2022 has had to be cancelled at the request of officers, due to service pressures affecting ability to report and support the meeting at that time. This topic will be carried forward and held at the earliest opportunity, subject to agreement of a new Scrutiny Work Programme after May 2022.

However, re-convened meetings of the Workforce Working Group and Bus Services Working Group will be held before the end of this municipal year.

2.6 Regional Scrutiny:

2.6.1 **New Education Partnership ‘Partneriaeth’** – The new Education Partnership, following the dissolution of ERW, consists of Swansea Council, Carmarthenshire Council and Pembrokeshire Council. A legal agreement has now been approved by each Council which confirms the terms of the partnership and governance arrangements, including scrutiny arrangements. A Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group, comprising of Education Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs or equivalent of each of the 3 Councils (like the previous arrangement) will scrutinise the work of the regional Partnership which will support the delivery of school improvement, and ensure greater public accountability over decisions made. Scrutiny will seek reassurance and consider if the Partnership is operating according to the Joint Committee Agreement, and its Business Plan, and is being managed effectively. Responsibility for scrutiny support, as well as responsibility for other functions, will be determined in due course by the Partneriaeth Joint Committee, comprising the Leaders of the three Councils, as the strategic decision-making body.

2.6.2 **Swansea Bay City Region City Deal** – Swansea Scrutiny is also involved in the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee established during 2018/19. This formal arrangement involves three Councillor representatives from each of the four Councils involved in the City Deal, meeting to scrutinise the work of the Joint Committee responsible for delivering the City Deal programme. Swansea’s Councillor representatives, appointed by Council, are: Jan Curtice, Phil Downing & Jeff Jones. As per Joint Agreement, the Joint Scrutiny Committee is serviced by Neath Port Talbot Council. Although originally scheduled to meet quarterly meetings, additional meetings are being arranged as required.

3. **Monitoring the Work Programme**

3.1 The Committee is responsible for monitoring progress against the agreed work programme and this includes work undertaken by the informal Panels and Working Groups and findings, to ensure that this work is effective and has the required visibility.

3.2 **Appendix 4a** provides a timetable of all scrutiny activities (projected or actual where dates are known). Lead councillors and officers are also noted within.

3.3 **Appendix 4b** provides a snapshot of progress with all of the Panels and Working Groups established by the Committee and their current position.

- 3.4 Although a work programme has been agreed, with activities identified to take things up to the end of the current Council term (May 2022), the work programme is kept under constant review by the Committee, with changes made as necessary. The Committee will always retain the flexibility to adapt and re-prioritise the work of scrutiny, to ensure the continued relevance of the programme.

4. Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action

- 4.1 An issue was raised by a member of the public regarding difficulties for those without off street parking to charge electric vehicles at home, and solutions that would help to encourage electric vehicle take up in Swansea. At this stage the relevant Cabinet Members, Councillors Andrea Lewis and Mark Thomas (as it refers to both EV charging and highway issues) have been asked to jointly respond directly to the member of the public. Their response will be reviewed by the Committee Chair in considering whether this issue should be picked up within scrutiny.

There is no action required from the Scrutiny Programme Committee at this stage.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 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.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Agreed Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/22

Appendix 2: Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan 2021/22

Appendix 3: Cabinet Forward Plan

Appendix 4a: Scrutiny Work Programme – Projected Timetable of Activity

Appendix 4b: Progress Report – Current Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups