

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 met on the 31 January to discuss the first draft of their final report to Cabinet. The Panel will finalise their report at a Panel meeting on the 21 February when it will be referred to the Scrutiny Programme Committee for agreement.

(Inquiries may take up to six months to complete, as they 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 26 Jan 2022 MONITORING NOW COMPLETE

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. A progress report appears separately under Agenda Item 7.

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

This Panel meets every month. On the 20 January the Panel met with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors from Penyrheol Comprehensive school to discuss their improvement journey. The Panel will next meet on the 14 February where they will discuss this years Annual Budget as it relates to Education and also receive a briefing on education of Refugee and Asylum Seeker pupils.

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

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. The Panel last met on 12 January to receive an update on the management of Covid and Performance Monitoring.

The next meeting on 2 March will receive an update on the West Glamorgan Transformation Programme. It will also discuss the latest Performance Monitoring Report, Social Services Complaints Annual Report 2020-21 and receive a verbal update on management of Covid.

There will also be a Joint Social Services Panel meeting on 14 February to discuss the draft annual budget in relation to Social Services.

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

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. The Panel last met on 25 January to discuss the Performance Highlight Report and Emergency Staffing Plan.

The next meeting will be held on 9 March and is planning a discussion on the recently published IICSA report on Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks. The Safeguarding Quality Unit Annual Report and an update from the Regional Safeguarding Board is also scheduled for this meeting.

There will also be a Joint Social Services Panel meeting on 14 February to discuss the draft annual budget in relation to Social Services.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel last met on 25 January, receiving an update presentation from Swansea BID. The Panel also held some discussions regarding Foreshore Developments.

The Panel will next meet on 8 March to discuss the South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan, as well as the Project Update Report. For information only, the Panel will also receive a briefing note regarding the 'Impact of Brexit on Rural Development Programme and Funding Update (Post 2023)'.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel last met on 12 January to discuss Management of Green Space / Weed & Verge Management.

The Panel will next meet on March 15 to receive an update from the Nature Conservation Team regarding ongoing and planned projects.

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) **Regional Education Partnership**

The new regional education partnership called 'Partneriaeth' will commence shortly, and will include Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils. Following recent approval of a legal agreement by each Council's Cabinet, the next step will be for the new Partneriaeth Joint Committee to meet to agree responsibility for functions / organisational support for the Partnership and other arrangements. Within the agreed governance structure, there will be a Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group, similar to that which existed to scrutinise the Education Through Regional Working (ERW) Regional School Improvement Consortium.

b) **Swansea Bay City Region City Deal**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee met on 25 January and focussed on the Skills & Talent regional project and reviewed quarterly programme monitoring documents.

The next meeting is scheduled for 7 March, expected to focus on Digital Infrastructure, as well as carry out its quarterly programme monitoring.

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

c) **South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee**

Following establishment of the Corporate Joint Committee (CJC), the first meeting of the Committee took place on 13 January. The CJC involves Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils, as well as Brecon Beacons and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authorities, and will exercise functions relating to strategic land use planning, regional transport planning and the exercise of economic well-being powers. Cllr Rob Stewart (Swansea Council) was appointed Chair and Cllr Emlyn Dole (Carmarthenshire Council) appointed Vice Chair of the CJC. The Committee has agreed to set up a CJC Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee which will consist of three elected members from each Council which will meet at least quarterly. The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to be serviced by Neath Port Talbot Council, will scrutinise the decisions / actions of the CJC as it discharges its functions and performance in relation to policy objectives and targets. The Joint Scrutiny arrangement will not preclude scrutiny within constituent Councils in order to discuss the impact of the CJC on their Council and locality. The CJC also met on 25 January in order to establish its budget for the 2022/2023 financial year. The next meeting is scheduled for 15 March 2022.

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.

The Working Group met again on 2 February in order to revisit the topic and consider the latest position, information and experience including the results of the further staff survey carried out by the Council. The outcome of the meeting will be reported in due course to the Committee.

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 the 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 was reported to the Committee on 19 October. It was agreed that a further meeting of the Working Group be held before the end of the municipal year to enable follow up on the Group's recommendations and see what changes / improvements had been made. This further meeting will be held on 14 March.

d) **Road Safety** (convener: Cllr Steve Gallagher)

Following adjustment to the Scrutiny Work Programme this Working Group was brought forward.

The meeting will enable information, questions and discussion to understand the Council's role and responsibilities on road safety, e.g., asking about hot spots; work to improve road safety; preventative measures; speed controls; safety of cycling routes; partnership working, etc.

A meeting was planned for February 2022 but has had to be cancelled 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.

e) **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:

- Active Travel
- Accessibility for the Disabled / Elderly