

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 21 February to agree a final report. It is being presented to the Scrutiny Programme Committee on 15 March to ask the Committee to agree that the final report can be submitted to Cabinet for decision.

(NB - 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. The Panel at its last meeting on the 15 February looked at the Annual Budget Proposals for 2022/23 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan. They also received a verbal update on Sustainable Swansea. There is no further meeting planned for this municipal year.

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

This Panel meets every month. On the 14 February the Panel met with to discuss this years Annual Budget as it relates to Education. On the 15 March, the Panel's final meeting of the municipal year, they will discuss education for Asylum Seeker and Refugee pupils and will receive an update on three of their watching brief items, namely, Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Services, the Implementation of the New Curriculum for Wales and Additional Learning Needs Reform.

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

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. A Joint Social Services Panel met on 14 February to discuss this year's draft annual budget as it relates to Social Services. The Adult Services Panel last met on 2 March to receive an update on the West Glamorgan Transformation Programme. It also discussed the Performance Monitoring Report for December 2021 and received a verbal update on management of Covid. There is no further meeting planned for this municipal year.

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

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. The Panel last met on 9 March to discuss the recently published IICSA report on Child Sexual Exploitation by Organised Networks. Representatives from the Police and Education attended for this item. The Panel also received a briefing on the Youth Justice Inspection report and an update on Emergency Staffing. There is no further meeting planned for this municipal year.

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 meeting on 8 March discussed the South West Wales Regional Economic Delivery Plan, as well as the regular Project Monitoring 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)'. There is no further meeting planned for this municipal year.

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.

As its final meeting of the municipal year, on 15 March the Panel will 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**

Following approval of a legal agreement by each Council's Cabinet, the new regional education partnership called 'Partneriaeth' includes Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils. 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. We are awaiting confirmation by the Partneriaeth Joint Committee on responsibility for functions / organisational support for the Partnership and other arrangements, so that the scrutiny can be organised and commence.

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 meeting that was due to take place on 7 March, for quarterly programme and financial monitoring, was cancelled.

The Joint Scrutiny 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?Committeed=417>

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

The Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) held its first meetings in 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 is in the process of being set up. It 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 next CJC 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 would 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