



Report of the Convener

Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel – 13 September 2022

Role of the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel

Purpose:	As it is the first meeting of the municipal year (and Council term) this report has been written to help give clarity and ensure understanding of the role of the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel. It is also designed to aid discussion on effective working.
Content:	A description of the role of Performance Panels is provided, the focus of the Climate Change and Nature Panel, and link to relevant Council Priorities / Policy Commitments.
Councillors are being asked to:	Discuss the role of the Panel and effective working
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Hannah Lawson, Convener of the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Liz Jordan, Scrutiny Officer E-mail: liz.jordan@swansea.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Within the Council's arrangements for Overview & Scrutiny, the Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing a Scrutiny Work Programme and managing the overall work of scrutiny to ensure that it is as effective as possible.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 At the same time the Committee must ensure that the work of scrutiny is:
 - manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available to support activities
 - relevant to council priorities
 - adding value and having maximum impact

- coordinated and avoids duplication.
- 1.4 In order to discharge the work of Scrutiny, the Scrutiny Programme Committee can establish informal Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.
- There are two types of Panel:
- Inquiry Panels will undertake discrete in-depth inquiries into significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis.
 - Performance Panels will undertake provide ongoing in-depth monitoring and challenge to particular services / service areas
- 1.5 The Committee has established six Performance Panels, each with a specific focus:
- Service Improvement & Finance
 - Education
 - Adult Services
 - Child & Family Services
 - Development & Regeneration
 - **Climate Change & Nature.**
- 1.6 Panel meetings will typically involve consideration / assessment of service performance reports from Cabinet Members, with support from lead officers, and discussion of issues arising. Where necessary, Panels will drill down into specific matters. Panels may request relevant reports on activities, performance and information that will help it to assess progress regarding the Council's work, commitments, and implementation of agreed plans.
- 1.7 Performance Panels are expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant Cabinet Members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, holding them to account for service performance, quality and improvement.
- 1.8 The Committee also determines the frequency of Performance Panel meetings that can be supported within the overall Scrutiny Work Programme. Performance Panels will meet on an on-going basis during the Council term until otherwise agreed by the Committee. Accordingly, Panels will develop a work plan for meetings that effectively discharge their responsibilities and Committee expectations.
- 1.9 Non-executive councillors who are not members of the Committee have the opportunity to participate in Panels and other informal task and finish groups. The membership of Panels and Working Groups is determined by the Committee. The Committee will appoint Panel Conveners in the first year of a Council term, however, has agreed for Performance Panels to then re-confirm / appoint their Convener at the start of every subsequent municipal year. There are no fixed number of seats on Panels, however, more than one political group should be represented on each and should be of a manageable size in terms of team working and effective questioning. A minimum of 3 members should be present at all meetings.

- 1.10 Performance Panel Conveners are required to provide the Scrutiny Programme Committee with regular progress reports on the work and impact of their Panels. Performance Panel conveners can attend meetings of the Scrutiny Programme Committee as co-opted members.
- 1.11 Panels and Working Group meetings are accessible to the public, just as the Scrutiny Programme Committee. Agendas, reports, letters relating to scrutiny activities are published on the Council's modern.gov online platform:
<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

2. The Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel

- 2.1 The Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel is responsible for ongoing monitoring of Council performance in relation to climate change and the natural environment. It will monitor delivery of the Council's work, commitments and implementation of agreed plans, and assess progress.
- 2.2 The Panel currently has a membership of 11 councillors.
- 2.3 In accordance with the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme, the Panel meets every two months. This has been programmed for 10am, usually on a Tuesday or Wednesday.
- 2.4 The development of this Panel followed a scrutiny inquiry, which looked at how the Council manages its responsibilities in relation to the natural environment in Swansea, including statutory requirements under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, and subsequent introduction of a new Corporate Priority of Maintaining and Enhancing Swansea's Natural Resources and Biodiversity. This also links with the Climate Emergency, declared by the Council in June 2019, and the recent declaration by the Council in November 2021 of a Nature Emergency.

The Panel was established by the Committee in July 2019 as the Natural Environment Panel and was renamed the Climate Change and Nature Panel in July 2022. The Panel has been focused on contributing to the ongoing development and enhancement of Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity, acting as a critical friend for the Cabinet, and helping to ensure accountability for performance. To support regular monitoring of key activity the Panel has received a 'Nature Conservation - Project Updates' report annually, providing an overview of all projects and assessment of progress. This provides a regular 'health check' on natural environment activity to facilitate challenge by the Panel. The Panel has then, where necessary, drilled down on specific work, to provide a more in-depth level of scrutiny. For example, during 2021/22 this included discussion on: Ash Dieback, Water Pollution, Local Flood Risk, Climate Emergency Declaration Action Plan. From this municipal year the Panel will increase its focus on Climate Change and receive regular updates to provide an overview of Council work in this area and support monitoring of key activity.

- 2.5 The Panel will write to the relevant Cabinet Members, to convey its views including suggested action, arising from meeting discussions. Letters, and responses where requested, are reported back to the Panel for comments and discussion as necessary.
- 2.6 Link to Corporate Objectives as set out within the Corporate Plan 2022/23:

*Delivering on **Nature Recovery and Climate Change** - so that we maintain and enhance nature and biodiversity in Swansea, reduce our carbon footprint and tackle climate change.*

The 'Delivering on Nature Recovery and Climate Change' objective is new for 2022/23 and is a development from the previous Well-being Objective 'Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity'. This new Well-being Objective has been adopted to place particular emphasis on addressing the long-term challenges arising from climate change and the threat to biodiversity; following Welsh Government declarations for Wales, the Council has declared both a Climate Emergency and a Nature Emergency, which will be responded to through this Well-being Objective.

The Council's Corporate Plan, pages 29-33, relate specifically to Climate Change and Nature matters and have been **appended to this report**.

- 2.7 Link to Policy Commitments 2022-2027 (taken from Council report 7 July 2022):

Climate Change

- Swansea Council is committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- We will support delivery of the first phase of the Blue Eden Lagoon project.
- We aim to progress the development of a council-operated solar energy farm at the City's Tir John site.
- The Council will strive to install more electric vehicle (EV) charging points across the county, supporting a move to more EV ownership.
- We will install more LED street lighting.
- We will develop a new city-wide tree planting map allowing us to plant thousands of new trees in communities.
- We aim to make neighbourhood greening improvements.
- Swansea Council will continue to review the council transport fleet to maximise opportunities for use of a green fleet in line with its green fleet strategy.

Housing

- Swansea Council commit to providing more energy efficient homes and more affordable homes, alongside more investment in social housing.

100 days target:

Transport and Energy

- The Council will announce progress on the Blue Eden project.
- and consider further extensions.
- Swansea Council will support and enable the increase and availability of electric vehicle (EV) charging points and develop a wider EV charging strategy.
- We will continue to review the council transport fleet to increase the green fleet in line with its agreed green fleet strategy.
- We will progress discussions on the development of a hydrogen fuelling hub.

3. Support

3.1 Performance Panels have the dedicated support of a member of the Council's Scrutiny Team. For the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel it is currently Liz Jordan, liz.jordan@swansea.gov.uk. This lead Scrutiny Officer will assist with work planning and project-manage scrutiny activities and help to ensure that things run smoothly, for example by:

- directly supporting meetings
- liaison with Cabinet Members, departments, partners and the public
- contacting and arranging witness sessions
- carrying out research and arranging evidence gathering
- carrying out and assisting with any consultation and public engagement exercises
- helping to keep the work to time
- capturing and reflecting back the ideas, evidence gathered and any key issues that have been highlighted
- assisting in the drafting of scrutiny letters and reports
- promoting work using social media and other methods of communication.

3.2 The Corporate Management Team and Service Departments are also an essential source of advice and support. Engagement with departments will be important in providing context for areas of work, knowledge about policies and service delivery, and technical expertise.

3.3 The Committee should recognise that resource constraints may have an impact on the scrutiny activity and delivery of work plans. Being focussed, proportionate and flexible will be important as we carry out scrutiny.

4. Effective Working

4.1 The Panel is encouraged to consider how it can work more effectively, for example in its preparation for meetings, and think about its approach to issues including the following:

- Developing Questions and Questioning Strategy
- Use of short Pre-meetings / Post meetings
- Team / Inclusive Working and Communication
- Decorum at meetings
- Meeting times / length

- Any other practical considerations.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Extract from Corporate Plan 2022/23 on 'Nature Recovery and Climate Change'.