



Report of the Convener

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 27 October 2022

Role of the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

Purpose:	As it is the first meeting of the municipal year (and Council term) this report has been written to help to give clarity and ensure understanding of the role of the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel. It is also designed to aid the discussion on effective working.
Content:	A description of the role of Performance Panels, the focus of the Education Panel, and link to relevant Council Priorities / Policy Commitments is provided.
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the role of the Panel and effective working
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Lyndon Jones, Convener of the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel
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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 Scrutiny 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 Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

- 2.1 The Education Scrutiny Performance Panel is responsible for ongoing monitoring of Council performance in relation to all Education matters. The Panel have considered items within the following five categories:

1. Individual Schools Scrutiny

This includes speaking to individual schools across Swansea with the purpose of understanding their current performance and prospects for improvement. In 2021/22, the Panel met with Morryston Secondary School and Penyrheol Secondary School. These meetings were conducted via Microsoft Teams. Before each session, the Panel also met with the relevant School Improvement Adviser to understand the current position at the school. Prior to the pandemic (and hopefully in future years) the Panel have and will go out to schools to meet and speak to Head Teachers, Chairs of Governors and pupils in order to gain an understanding of the work completed on the ground.

2. Annual Scrutiny Items

- Annual Education Performance against identified priorities (RAG) and Q&A with the Cabinet Member
- Annual Budget as it relates to Education matters
- Pupil Development Grant Spend on vulnerable pupils
- School Improvement Services

3. Watching Brief Items

- Additional Learning Needs Reform (twice yearly)
- New Curriculum for Wales (twice yearly)
- Education Other Than At School services EOTAS (annually)
- Education Recovery Planning (as needed)
- Future years to include Pupil Voice Manifesto progress (to be agreed)

4. Updates

- ERW, and now Partneriath Regional Education Partnership progress update/s
- ERW, and now Partneriath Regional Education Partnership Scrutiny (*Convener of Education Scrutiny Panel updates the Education Panel after each ERW and now Partneriath Scrutiny meeting*)
- Swansea Skills Partnership progress update

5. Other Items

Any areas of concern that may arise throughout the year. This enables the flexibility to add items to work programme as and when need. This

has included for example: educating Asylum Seeker and Refugee Children briefing and also briefing relating to safeguarding with regard to Harassment of pupils in school settings.

- 2.2 The Panel currently has a membership of 14 councillors and two parent governor co-optee's. It has two vacancies for co-optee's from faith schools namely Catholic Church in Wales and Church in Wales.
- 2.3 In accordance with the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme, the Panel meets every month. This has been programmed, usually for, a Thursday at 4.00pm (or 4.30pm when necessary) but should the Panel wish to make a visit to a school where they wish to meet pupils and staff this will need to be arranged in school hours.
- 2.5 The Panel will write to the relevant Cabinet Members, to convey its views including views and recommendations/action, arising from its discussions. These letters, and responses from the Cabinet Member, are reported back to the Panel for comment, discussion and further follow up if required.
- 2.6 Link to Policy Commitments 2022-2027 (taken from Council report of 7 July 22)

Education

Swansea Council will commit to investing £1 billion for better education, including £150 million investment in new and better schools.

Commitments, the first one hundred days of term:

- We commit to mapping out future priorities, in line with our Quality in Education (QEd) / Sustainable Communities for Learning programme.
 - Swansea Council will commence the upgrade works at Cefn Hengoed Community School, progressing our £7million investment in a new Community Sports Barn in Bonymaen.
 - We shall begin delivery of new special school facilities.
 - The Council will seek to expand free school meal provision and implement a freeze on school meal prices.
 - We will commence the new regional partnership arrangements; the South West Wales Education Partnership will be a regional collaborative arrangement designed to promote excellence in all of our schools.
 - We will keep school leadership standards high in Swansea.
- 2.7 The priorities for 2022-23 that are set out within our corporate plan are:
 - Improving education and skills - so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life. A link to the [Councils Corporate Plan](#), pages 17 to 20 relate specifically to Education matters have been attached to report.

3. Support

- 3.1 Performance Panels have the dedicated support of a member of the Council's Scrutiny Team. For the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel, it is currently Michelle Roberts, michelle.roberts@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/assist with 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: None