



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Tuesday, 17 January 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
M Jones
F D O'Brien
T M White

Councillor(s)

R Fogarty
H Lawson
S Pritchard

Councillor(s)

V A Holland
P N May
M S Tribe

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

Beth Allender Elizabeth Lee

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley S M Jones
P R Hood-Williams L R Jones

Officer(s)

Lee Cambule	Tackling Poverty Service Manager
Amy Hawkins	Head of Adult Services & Tackling Poverty
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader
Anthony Richards	Poverty and Prevention Strategy and Development Manager
Debbie Smith	Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Samantha Woon	Democratic Services Officer

Also present

Councillor R C Stewart, Leader/Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy
Councillor A Pugh, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): T J Hennegan and W G Lewis

61 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

62 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

63 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 13 December, 2022, be signed and approved as a correct record.

64 Public Question Time.

There were no public questions

65 Report on the Delivery of the Corporate Priority of Tackling Poverty.

The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing provided a report which set out progress over the last 12 months in delivering the Corporate Priority of Tackling Poverty. It presented evidence, insights and intelligence to demonstrate the contributions that have been made in delivering this Council priority, as well as future plans. It covered current challenges, including the impact of the cost of living crisis, and the Council's response. The report also considered the findings and recommendations of Audit Wales' 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' Report, published in November 2022, showing the Authority's response to the Audit recommendations and planned action.

The Head of Adult Services assisted by the Tackling Poverty Service Manager and Poverty and Prevention Strategy Development Manager, took the Committee through the report highlighting certain aspects, including Context, Corporate Priority, Corporate Plan Steps, Corporate Performance Indicators, National Strategic Drivers, Additional Developments and the Way Forward.

Members noted that the Covid-19 Pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis had disproportionately impacted low income households, pushing more people into poverty and those experiencing it, further into poverty resulting in increasing demand for services including crisis support services and increased complexities for those in need. Swansea Council's ongoing response to the Cost of Living Crisis was contributing to mitigating the impact of poverty and increased levels of demand.

Committee questioning and discussions focussed on the following:

- 1) Levels of resources to tackle poverty.
- 2) The 'Ten Steps' approach detailed in the Corporate Plan 2017 – noted that the Plan was being refreshed to reflect the cost of living crisis and would remain under review.
- 3) Monitoring arrangements for the many grants for individuals and organisations.
- 4) Efforts to improve employability - education, training and employment initiatives were detailed. There was discussion on tackling the barriers to employment such as access to public and personal transport, and child care.
- 5) The ECO4 grant scheme to help improve the energy efficiency of housing stock occupied by low income and vulnerable households – noted that applications were still being considered however 100 people had benefited from the ECO3 Scheme. Officers agreed to obtain further details from Housing colleagues to share with the Committee.

- 6) The development of a performance framework for Tackling Poverty - noted challenges associated with the performance framework, but plans to develop a strategic approach with monthly PI monitoring and alignment with the Corporate Plan were highlighted.
- 7) Process for Councillors to make referrals to the Welfare Rights Team - the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing agreed to circulate details to all Councillors.
- 8) The benefits of providing school meals, specifically to Comprehensive School children, earlier in the school day was discussed. The Head of Adult Services would liaise with colleagues in Education on this.
- 9) Provision of Mental Health support - the established links with partners in relation to mental health within social care was detailed.
- 10) The response to the Audit Wales report – action plan was noted. The Audit Report included a number of positive reflections of good practice identified in Swansea.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Officers for their input.

Resolved that the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing reflecting discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

66 Scrutiny of Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities: Q & A Session with Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy (Councillor Rob Stewart).

The Leader of the Council/Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy attended for Q & A session on his portfolio responsibilities. To assist the Committee, in addition to the 'key headlines' written report provided, the Leader gave a presentation which highlighted progress in relation to:

- Skyline and River Corridor 2022-2025.
- Kingsway & Oxford Street.
- Palace Theatre.
- Community Hub/One Stop Shop in the former BHS Building.
- Castle Gardens.
- Copper Bay.
- Princess House.
- Improved Rail and Bus Links across the Region.
- Blue Eden and Mega Energy Hub.

Committee questioning and discussion focussed on the following:

- 1) City Deal Investment / Private Sector funding – noted that the 9 major projects under City Deal had now been fully approved and private finance had been realised in terms of the smaller projects. Larger project investment was gradually forthcoming. The Committee heard that projects are regularly reviewed through the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee.
- 2) Interest in the new office building at 71/72 The Kingsway – noted that quarter of the office space has been let.

- 3) City Centre recovery / new businesses – noted the Quadrant had attracted four new businesses and another established business in the City Centre had invested in refurbishments. Businesses in the City Centre had performed well over the Christmas period. There was also discussion around promotion of the City Centre particular as some businesses with a presence outside of the Centre may be downsizing. Noted there were a variety of monitoring activities measuring footfall and evaluating the use of the City Centre.
- 4) Advice from development partners – noted that since the conception of the City Deal in 2016, a number of consultants had undertaken reviews and the Council remained confident it had the right strategy and plan, which allows an element of flexibility. The Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy stated that Urban Splash, the Council's long term regeneration partner whose involvement includes the development of Swansea Central North and the Civic Centre Site, could be contacted to attend a future scrutiny meeting for Councillors to better understand their role and thinking.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy and the Chief Executive, who was also present, for their input.

Resolved that the Chair write to the Leader of the Council/Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy reflecting discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

67 Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report:

Resolved that the Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress reports in respect of Service Improvement and Finance and Education be noted.

68 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

Resolved that the membership of the Panels and Working Groups as reported, be agreed.

69 Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Chair presented the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2022/23 which the Committee is responsible for monitoring.

As per Committee work plan, the main items scheduled for the next meeting on 14 February was:

- **Scrutiny of Public Services Board – Consultation on PSB's Draft Local Well-being Plan:** Every 5 years Swansea Public Services Board develops a Local Well-being Plan, which sets out objectives and steps that are used to guide PSB actions each year. The Committee is a statutory consultee on the Plan and will have opportunity to review and comment ahead of decision-making and Plan approval. The Plan must be published by May 2023. The Chair of the PSB, Cllr. Andrea Lewis, will attend along with relevant officer(s) to report to the Committee and answer questions.

- **Scrutiny of Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities: Houses in Multiple Occupation** - Councillor David Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance, will attend along with relevant officer(s) to report on this matter and answer Committee questions.
- **Working Groups:** The Road Safety Working Group met on 7 Dec and has now concluded. The Working Group has written to the Cabinet Member with its views and recommendations and once the Cabinet Member has responded this will be reported to the Committee, and follow up programmed into future Committee work plan.

70 Scrutiny Letters.

The Chair presented a report on 'Scrutiny Letters' for information.

71 Date and Time of Upcoming Panel / Working Group Meetings.

The Chair referred to the date and time of upcoming Scrutiny Panel/Working Group Meetings, for information.

The meeting ended at 5.34 pm

Chair