

Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23: Scrutiny Stories

Creating a Safer Swansea

The Committee is the authority's designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee. In discharging this role, the Committee held its annual session in April 2023 focusing on the performance of the Safer Swansea Partnership, looking at partnership priorities, activities, and impact.

Lead representatives from both South Wales Police and the Council, who are involved in the joint-chairing arrangement for the Safer Swansea Partnership Steering Group, attended to present information and take questions on the work of the Safer Swansea Partnership.

This included questions on Governance and Leadership, Resources, the Evening & Night-Time Economy, the Mayhill disturbance and partnership / policing review, Hate Crime reporting and monitoring, Community Integration and Cohesion, Anti-Social Behaviour (off-road bikes), dealing with Sexual Offences / Rape, Substance Misuse, Community Engagement and Co-production, and new Partnership Community Safety Priorities for 2023-26.

Committee Letter to the Joint Chairs of the Safer Swansea Partnership can be found here:

[Apr 2023](#)

Partnership Working

The Committee is responsible for scrutinizing the performance of Swansea Public Services Board (PSB) and how it is making a difference. This was discussed during meetings held in October 2022 and February 2023.

In October, as part of ongoing scrutiny, the Committee considered the PSB Annual Report 2021/22 in relation to overall progress and performance of the PSB. It also considered information on work being done to improve the PSB's performance framework (following issue raised by the Committee); the new Assessment of Local Well-being (published in May 2022), and the development of a new Local Well-being Plan.

In February, the Committee was formally consulted on the Draft PSB Local Well-being Plan, which must be in place by May 2023. It also followed up on issues arising from previous scrutiny sessions, and action taken.

The Committee has continued to make suggestions to challenge improvement, including around visibility, the measuring and reporting of performance against objectives and impact, and public engagement.

The Committee will follow up on the development of the Well-being Plan at the next PSB Scrutiny session, around August 2023, when it hopes to be able to see the associated action plan and how performance against the Plan will be measured.

Committee Letters to the Chair of Swansea PSB can be found here:

[Oct 2022](#)

[Feb 2023](#)

Tackling Poverty

Ensuring that all Council Priorities are sufficiently covered within the Scrutiny Work Programme, the Committee is annually monitoring the delivery of the Corporate Priority on Tackling Poverty, to keep close watch on progress, follow up on issues raised, and enable scrutiny views to influence action and improvement.

A report was provided the Committee with information on progress over the last 12 months. It presented evidence, insights and intelligence that demonstrated 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.

This led to questions and discussion including exploration of the level of resources to tackle poverty in Swansea and meet corporate objective, and, how in addition to a dedicated Tackling Poverty Service, this is embedded across the Council, with all departments playing a role, and partnership arrangements helping the Council to deliver on objectives.

The Committee also followed up on concerns from last year's session about efforts to improve employability and skills, and tackle barriers including access to public and personal transport. It heard about the various education, training and employment programmes, and initiatives and successes, including from Communities for Work, Workways+, Pathways to Work, Beyond Bricks & Mortar, and the opening of a 'pop-up' Employment Hub within the Quadrant Shopping Centre. There was also discussion about the links between poverty and mental health, the mental health support available from partners and joint working between teams.

Committee Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s), and their response, can be found here:

[Jan 2023
Response](#)

Developing the Workforce

The Committee takes responsibility for following up on previous Scrutiny Working Groups, to check on progress with the topic / issue(s) and response to any specific suggestions or recommendations made and agreed action coming out of the scrutiny session.

The Committee received an update on action following the Workforce Scrutiny Working Group, which concluded in February 2022, enabling the Committee to consider progress against recommended improvement and highlight issues where further action may be required.

A comprehensive report on progress since the Working Group, was provided including update on issues raised by the Working Group, informing of actions taken in the delivery of work and achievements on Workforce, which were discussed.

The Committee heard about key developments including recent agreement by Cabinet of a Post Pandemic Working Model (and seven agreed principles), and Workforce Strategy 2022-27, which now provided a longer-term picture and clearer focus on workforce priorities.

The Committee agreed that there should be clarity around standards and expectations regarding future working and customer contact, given there is now an established mix of office and home working across the organisation.

The latest position was also provided on wellbeing and sickness absence, agency workers including improvement actions taken, HR and Service Centre operations, Headcount/FTE, and Occupational Health Data. The Committee asked about the uptake of wellbeing / mental health training by staff.

Committee Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s), and their response, can be found here:

[Nov 2022
Response](#)

Making our Roads Safer

The Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group met to look at a number of issues including speed controls (signs, humps, and cameras), the new 20mph limits, road conditions and partnership working. It met with Officers from the Road Safety Team.

The Working Group was concerned that the Welsh Government Road Safety Grant has been held back for the 2nd year in a row due to the 20mph speed reduction scheme and the potential impact this will have. It requested the Cabinet Member to appeal to the Go Safe Partnership to be more proactive in the area of Gower Commons. It recommended increasing signage and banners outside schools as a deterrent to remind drivers to drive and park safely around schools and raised the need for developments in the Kerbcraft programme with the particular suggestion of developing a module on encouraging walking to school and general active travel. The Working Group was concluded in December 2022.

Working Group recommendations will be followed up by the Scrutiny Programme Committee during 2023-24.

Working Group Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s), and their response, can be found here:

[Dec 2022
Response](#)

Working with Service Users

The Co-production Scrutiny Working Group met to look at a number of issues related to the Council's role and responsibilities on the development of co-production in the Council and progress, helping to improve involvement and engagement with service users, partners, and the public in the design & delivery of services & decision-making. The Working Group met with the relevant Cabinet Member and officers. Also in attendance was the Director of SCVS and an officer from Social Services.

Overall, the Working Group was encouraged by the approach the Council are taking to coproduction. It was appraised on developments so far including the work of Co-Pro Lab Wales who are contracted for 12 months until October 2023 to provide advice and support and produce a feedback report. It received an update on co-production progress in Social Services and heard about Internal Coproduction Champions, a model favoured by the Group which can be harder to achieve than a centralised coproduction provision but has the potential to be more successful in embedding co-production. It recommended using a mix of existing coproduction tools and bespoke ones and requested training for members as well as officers. The Working Group was concluded in March 2023.

Working Group recommendations will be followed up by the Scrutiny Programme Committee during 2023-24.

Working Group Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s), and their response, can be found here:

[Mar 2023
Response](#)

Influencing Cabinet decisions

With Pre-Decision Scrutiny, the Committee can consider Cabinet reports and give views on the proposed decision(s). It is an important practice where Scrutiny Councillors look at a planned decision shortly before it is made by Cabinet. Scrutiny Councillors bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than that provided by Cabinet members or officers, which can help decisions to be more robust.

Pre-decision Scrutiny can help Councillors to understand what is being proposed and rationale, and considering decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence and possibly improve them. It gives Scrutiny Councillors an opportunity to challenge, for example, how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision and how those risks might be mitigated.

Relevant Cabinet Members and officers will attend Scrutiny to present and explain proposals and answer questions. Committee views will be formally communicated to Cabinet Member(s) after the meeting, and the Chair can then attend the Cabinet meeting to convey those views for Cabinet's attention before any decision is taken. Cabinet should provide explanation of any rejection of Scrutiny views.

In March 2023 the Committee considered a Cabinet report on the 'National 20 Mph Default Speed Limit', which comes into effect on 17 September 2023. It set out the consultation process to be followed and sought confirmation of the approach taken in respect of implementation of the change in law. It also asked Cabinet to agree to delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Member to approve any exceptions agreed with individual ward members leading to the formal public advertisement of the appropriate Traffic Regulation Orders. The session helped the Committee to understand what is happening, the process and implications for the Council and citizens. It was clear to the Committee that the department had a sound grasp of the situation and preparations were well underway to fulfil the Council's obligations. Councillors reflected positively on the engagement to date with them on proposals for their areas.

The Committee recognised this represented a significant change in the law which will require a culture change, and carried with it several risks to success. The Committee offered some views on implementation for Cabinet's attention, in relation to: costs and funding to support implementation; the Council's influence on local enforcement to ensure compliance with the new speed limit; what will happen to traffic signage and calming measures already in place for current 20Mph zones, such as around Schools; and, the extent of public communication that will be necessary to raise awareness amongst the public, for successful implementation, with emphasis on the road / community safety benefits, as well as keeping local Councillors fully informed of works in their area in preparation of the change to facilitate their engagement with local residents and awareness of what is happening.

Committee Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s) can be found here:

[Mar 2023](#)

Monitoring Climate Change & the Natural Environment

The Climate Change & Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel is responsible for ongoing monitoring of performance in relation to climate change and the natural environment, and has been monitoring the delivery of the Council's work, commitments, and implementation of agreed plans, to assess progress.

Amongst specific topics covered over the last year were:

- The Council's Climate Change Action Plan
- Water Quality and Management
- Green Vehicle Adoption
- Weed Management / Use of Glyphosate
- Air Quality Management
- Local Flood Risk Management

The Panel wrote to relevant Cabinet Member(s) following each meeting to give views, raise concerns and make recommendations, for example the Panel discussed the issue of Public / Residential EV Charging in January 2023, as it was concerned people who choose an electric car but do not have off road parking are forced to use public chargers and are seriously financially disadvantaged.

The Panel felt very strongly about this and queried if the Council could consider installing various devices that are available, which allow people to charge on the road from their own properties. The Panel was informed that the Council has installed several public charge points, providing people with the opportunity to charge within their local community and that this was part of a wider provision of charge points offered by commercial operators. Councillors heard that people are not allowed to use private electric vehicle charging cables to charge vehicles on street locations in Swansea due to the risk this poses to the public, but the Council is keeping abreast of new developments that could potentially make that possible in the future.

Appendix A

The Panel referred to a pilot scheme in Plymouth where charging points come up out of the street, which would prevent adding to street furniture. Officers agreed to investigate the project in Plymouth and consider this in options for future infrastructure of this nature if funding becomes available.

Panel Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s) can be found here:

[Jan 2023](#)

Monitoring Education & Learning

The Education Scrutiny Performance Panel meets monthly and where possible involve schools in their Scrutiny activity, one example is shown below.

In January 2023, the Panel were pleased to meet the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors from Pontardulais Comprehensive School and each of the cluster of Primary Schools feeding into it, including Pengelli, Pontlliw, Penllergaer, Pontardulais and Llangyfelach Primary Schools. They also invited the Partneriaeth Link Officers, the School Improvement Service and the two Commissioned Headteachers for their input into the session.

The Panel were keen to discuss with them how the new Curriculum for Wales was being implemented on the ground and how the work being done at each Primary School in the cluster was being brought together as pupils made the transition to the Comprehensive School.

The Panel were encouraged to hear Headteachers in the cluster believe that the new curriculum itself is excellent in principle, because it is skills based, progressive and is relevant to the children and their experiences and needs. Although, they did say there is far more work involved in constructing this curriculum than anyone envisaged at a school level and particularly at the national level.

From this session the Panel developed a few learning points that have been shared with the Cabinet Member, Education Department, and schools.

A few of the learning points the Panel took away from the session, includes the cluster having:

- A shared understanding of what the cluster means by progression.
- Continuum of learning between primary and secondary schools.
- Buy in, enthusiasm and excitement in what the new curriculum can do for its pupils.
- Positive and constructive challenge across the cluster, but always in partnership and in a supportive way
- Regular meetings of the headteachers from across the cluster to talk about the progress and ideas openly and frankly.

Appendix A

- Good development support and brokerage of professional learning.
- Ensuring teaching staff themselves, have the knowledge and the confidence to deliver what is a brand-new curriculum.
- Consistency of approach in relation to progression across the cluster.
- An agreed journey of progression across the cluster.
- Willingness to consider and take on board the input and views of others.
- Joint working and sharing of experience.
- Engaging with wider stakeholders.
- Shared understanding of approaches.

Monitoring Development & Regeneration

The Development & Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel has been responsible for ongoing monitoring of Council performance in relation to development and regeneration, including the 'health' of the city centre, wider economic development across Swansea and discussion about progress on the Swansea Bay City Deal. The Panel was focused on contributing to the ongoing development and regeneration of Swansea by acting as a critical friend for the Cabinet, and helping to ensure accountability.

The Panel has kept a close eye on the Council's regeneration programme and projects. This has included sites like Swansea Arena, the Civic Centre, Skyline, and the Community Hub. Amongst wider topics of concern, the Panel held a discussion on Tourism, including the Council's Destination Management Plan.

In January 2023 the Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel heard from the Cabinet Member, relevant officers and a key external stakeholder, Steve Crocker, Chair of Tourism Swansea Bay, which represents tourism, leisure, and hospitality businesses. The Panel were updated on key achievements over the last few years. With over 6000 jobs, local tourism is a significant employer in Swansea. The Panel asked a variety of questions exploring eco-tourism, free attractions, journalist visits, holiday lets and second homes, advertising, the post covid recovery plan and accommodation regulations. They were made aware of the steady increase of tourists to the area year on year outside of the Covid pandemic. The Panel noted the significance of tourism employment and potential introduction of statutory licencing and a tourism levy for holiday rentals. The Panel also requested further survey information regarding numbers of caravans visiting Swansea. Because of the impact of tourism in the area, potential legislation changes and with a new Development Management Plan in progress looking at 2023-25, Scrutiny Councillors will be following this up during 2023-24 to consider progress on Tourism.

Panel Letter to relevant Cabinet Member, and their response, can be found here:

[Jan 2023
Response](#)

Monitoring Council Budgets

The Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel keeps an overview of the Council's performance and finances. Every year it scrutinizes Council spending which is set by the Council which agrees an Annual Budget each March for the following year.

The proposed Council budget for 2022-23 was brought before the Panel in February 2023. Given the breadth of services covered by the budget, the two Social Services Panels and the Education Panel reviewed respective budgets with lead Cabinet Members and officers, and passed their views to the Service Improvement & Finance Panel to include in the Panel's overall feedback to Cabinet.

The Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to review the Annual Budget Reports in advance of consideration by the Cabinet. The Leader and the Director of Finance were in attendance.

Scrutiny Councillors' questions centred around borrowing costs, reserves, affordability, head count reduction and increased charges. The Panel reflected their thoughts to Cabinet regarding the risks to future service delivery from a headcount reduction, timing of Welsh Government budgets, increased capital charges, concerns with Council Tax increases further impacting an already inflated cost of living crisis and the detrimental effect to city centre footfall derived from increase car parking costs.

These points were raised by the Panel Convener at the Cabinet meeting. Subsequently a number of savings reductions resulting in a headcount reduction were deferred for a year to allow for a comprehensive review of services to be carried out.

Scrutiny carries out budget monitoring on an on-going basis at least quarterly.

Panel Letter to relevant Cabinet Member can be found here:

[Feb 2023](#)

Monitoring Children's Social Services

Councillors on the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel meet regularly to provide ongoing challenge to the performance of Children's Social Services, to ensure that good performance is maintained, and monitor service change and improvement across all areas of the service.

The Panel regularly receives a performance monitoring report on Child and Family Services which enables Councillors to ask questions about performance and improvement, focusing on outcomes, provision, and leadership. As well as considering the performance monitoring report, discussions over the past year were held on several specific topics:

- Residential Care Services (including Ty Nant)
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Child and Family Improvement Programme
- Regional Safeguarding Board
- Safeguarding Quality Unit Annual Report
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Child Disability Services
- Support for Carers
- Youth Offending Service
- Draft Budget Proposals

During discussion on CAMHS in January 2023, the Panel queried how CAMHS measured up against previous Scrutiny Inquiry recommendations and was pleased to see the Inquiry's recommendation that CAMHS should come in house was now being taken forward. The Inquiry had also raised the issue of transition from children to adults and how children felt that one minute they had access to CAMHS and then when they reached 18, especially young boys/men, they were left without the support they needed. Councillors were informed that transition is one of the key areas that CAMHS has been exploring but needs to do more on, and that they see the transfer of CAMHS back into Swansea Bay as one of the key drivers for this. The Panel was pleased to hear CAMHS are looking at recruiting a transitional nurse and have a new regional transitional policy.

Appendix A

The Panel queried what support mechanisms would be available to a youngster in crisis and if they would be referred through to CAMHS in the first instance or if there would other mechanisms to pick up the young person and heard CAMHS has a crisis service which operates between 9am and 9pm and is accessed via the single point of access number. Councillors were pleased to hear the plan is to increase this service to 24-7 by June 2023 at the latest.

Panel Letter to relevant Cabinet Member can be found here:

[Jan 2023](#)

Monitoring Adult Services

Like the Child & Family Services Performance Panel, Scrutiny Councillors met every six weeks to focus on the performance of Adult Social Services.

The Panel regularly received performance management information, which included data on enquires through the Common Access Point; Client Reviews; Carers Assessments; Residential and Community Reablement; Domiciliary and Residential Care; and Safeguarding responses. It also considered the Director of Social Services' statutory Annual Report for 2021/22. The Panel also held a session on the delivery of Council Objectives and Policy Commitments in relation to Adult Services.

As well as looking at overall performance, discussions over the past year were held on several specific topics:

- Actions following Audit Report – Direct Payments for Adult Social Care
- Recent Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection Reports
- Adult Services Transformation Programme
- Options Appraisal for Assistive Technology and Community Alarms
- West Glamorgan Transformation Programme (including relationship between Health and Social Care and the rebalancing agenda, and partnership elements of Health Board Plans for Change)
- Local Area Coordination
- Adult Services Complaints Annual Report
- Commissioning Reviews
- Draft Budget Proposals, including Annual Review of Charges

Prompted by a recent Audit Wales report on Direct Payments for Adult Social Care, the Panel was pleased to hear that of the 10 recommendations, the Council was meeting its requirements and exceeding in some areas. However, the Panel asked if the wider care team have up to date knowledge of direct payments and understand how they can be used. There was some concern raised around available data and welcomed work within the Direct Payments Team to develop more quantitative and qualitative data, so there is a level of measure and

Appendix A

assurance around whether Direct Payments are being used properly and effectively. It was agreed that personal stories of how Direct Payments are used will begin to be shared with the Panel.

Panel Letter to relevant Cabinet Member can be found here:

[Nov 2022](#)