



## Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Governance & Audit Committee – 25 October 2023

### Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 & Scrutiny Work Programme (For Information)

<b>Purpose:</b>	This report supports the development of a strong relationship between Scrutiny and the Governance & Audit Committee by providing the recently published Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 and information about the current Scrutiny Work Programme.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Council Constitution
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal, Finance
<b>Lead Councillor:</b>	Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
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#### 1. Scrutiny Work Programme

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing the Council's 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 The Scrutiny Work Programme is guided by the overriding principle that the work of Scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of time and resources.

It also needs to be:

- 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 A range of Scrutiny activity is carried out either by the Committee, or informal Panels (for in-depth scrutiny) or Working Groups (one-off meetings) established by the Committee. The Scrutiny Programme Committee maintains an overview of agreed Scrutiny activities to ensure that the work programme is delivered effectively, and co-ordinate work as necessary.

1.5 Scrutiny communicates findings, views and recommendations for improvement from its activities through Chair's Letters to Cabinet Members, and where appropriate by producing reports for Cabinet, for response as necessary.

1.6 All Scrutiny meetings are accessible to the public. Agendas, reports, letters relating to all Scrutiny activities will be published on the Council's modern.gov online platform:  
<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

## **2. Developing the Relationship between Scrutiny and the Governance & Audit Committee.**

2.1 The Council has long recognised the relationship between Scrutiny and Audit and need for:

- mutual awareness and understanding of each other's work
- respective work plans to be coordinated and avoiding duplication / gaps
- clear mechanism for referral of issues, if necessary

2.2 It is important that there is:

- clarity between the core roles of both functions
- regular conversations about Committees' work programmes, and responsibilities
- a way to ensure that issues can be passed between Committees, avoiding duplication

2.3 Action already taken as part of this process:

- i) Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee / Convener of Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel copied into Governance & Audit Committee agendas and vice versa, for information.
- ii) Work Programme / Work Plans published, at least annually, in each other's agenda for information.

- iii) Respective Chairs speaking, at least annually, at each other's Committee meeting on their work and the relationship between Scrutiny and Audit.
- iv) Governance & Audit Committee Chair invited to participate in the Annual Scrutiny Work Planning Conference.
- v) Chairs raise any issues re. coordination / duplication on ongoing basis
- vi) Where matters to be referred from Governance & Audit Committee Chair writes letter to Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee, and vice versa.

#### 2.3.1 Monitoring of External Audit / Inspection / Regulatory Reports:

The Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee and Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee decide between them the route that specific reports should take, i.e., whether reported to and monitored by Governance & Audit Committee or Scrutiny Programme Committee, as deemed appropriate.

In order to help co-ordinate activity in relation to external reports, the Governance & Audit Committee is provided with a Log of reports being dealt with by Scrutiny so that it can maintain an oversight of monitoring and be assured that reports are being effectively followed up. An updated Log is included in every Governance & Audit Committee meeting for awareness.

#### 2.3.2 Council Performance Peer Review and Self-Assessment / Annual Complaints Report:

In view of requirements from the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and additional responsibilities for the Governance & Audit Committee, we are making sure that this is co-ordinated with Scrutiny's existing and ongoing role in regularly challenging performance & improvement across Council services. It is noted that where the Governance & Audit Committee is considering any 'Performance' reports under this new regime, it is reaching out to the Convener of the Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel for input, to help avoid any duplication, and ensure respective activity is complementary. The Governance & Audit Committee being mainly concerned with assurance around the effectiveness of process.

#### 2.4 The relationship benefits from a number of Councillors sitting on both Committees, including the current Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

2.5 To facilitate any discussion the following papers are provided to the Governance & Audit Committee:

- Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 (**Appendix 1**)
- Current Scrutiny Work Programme, showing the various Scrutiny Panel and Working Group topics (**Appendix 2**)
- the work plan of the Scrutiny Programme Committee itself, which meets every month (**Appendix 3**)
- progress report on Panels / Working Groups / Regional Scrutiny (**Appendix 4**)

### **3. Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23**

3.1 Every year Council requires that an annual report is produced for the work of scrutiny for the previous municipal year.

3.2 The Scrutiny Annual Report is used to:

- Highlight the work carried out by Scrutiny
- Show how Scrutiny has made a difference
- Support continuous improvement for the Scrutiny function

3.3 The Annual Report looking back at 2022-23 was presented to Council on 5 October.

### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 Any costs that arise out of work plan activities, for example expenses for witnesses or transport costs, are not envisaged to be significant and will be contained within the existing Scrutiny Budget.

### **5. Legal Implications**

5.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

**Background papers:** None

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23

Appendix 2: Current Scrutiny Work Programme

Appendix 3: Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan

Appendix 4: Progress Report – Panels / Working Groups / Regional Scrutiny