



Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 November 2023

Scrutiny Letters

Purpose:	To ensure the Committee is aware of the Scrutiny Letters produced following various Scrutiny activities, and to track responses to date.
Content:	The report includes a log of Scrutiny Letters produced this municipal year and provides a copy of correspondence between Scrutiny and Cabinet Members for discussion as required.
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the Scrutiny Letters and responses• Make comments, observations and recommendations as necessary
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer:	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The production of Scrutiny Letters has become an established part of the way scrutiny operates in Swansea. Letters from the Chair (or Conveners) allow Scrutiny to communicate directly and quickly with relevant Cabinet Members.
- 1.2 These letters are used to convey views and conclusions about particular issues discussed, and provide the opportunity to raise concerns, ask for further information, and make recommendations. This enables Scrutiny to engage with Cabinet Members on a regular and structured basis.

2. Reporting of Letters

- 2.1 All Scrutiny Letters, whether they are written by the Scrutiny Programme Committee or conveners of Panels / Working Groups, are published to ensure visibility, of the outcomes from meetings, across the Council and public.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee agenda also includes a copy of letters to/from Cabinet Members for its attention and discussion as required, e.g., letters relating to the work of the Committee, Working Groups, and Inquiry Panel follow ups. Letters are included when Cabinet Member responses that were awaited are received or where a Scrutiny Letter did not require a response.
- 2.3 Where requested Cabinet Members are expected to respond in writing to Scrutiny Letters within 21 calendar days. The response should indicate what action (if any) they intend to take, or have taken, as a result of the views and recommendations made.
- 2.4 Letters relating to the work of Performance Panels are part of an ongoing dialogue with Cabinet Members and are therefore reported back and monitored by each Panel. However, all Performance Panel Conveners will provide a progress report to the Committee, including summary of correspondence with Cabinet Members and outcomes.

3. Letters Log

- 3.1 This report contains a log of Scrutiny Letters produced to enable the Committee to maintain an overview of letters activity over the current municipal year – see **Appendix 1**. The Letters Log will show the average time taken by Cabinet Members to respond to Scrutiny letters, and the percentage of letters responded to within timescale. For comparison, during the previous year (2022/23) 58 letters were sent to Cabinet Members, of which 20 required a written response. The average time taken to respond was 21 days, with 65% responded to within the 21 days target.
- 3.2 The following letter(s), not already reported back to the Committee, are **attached** for discussion:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Committee – Scrutiny of Active Travel	19 Sep	Letter to Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure
b	Committee Pre-decision Scrutiny – Oracle Project Closure Process and Transition to New Operation Model	18 Oct	Letter to Cabinet Member for Service Transformation

C	Procurement Scrutiny Inquiry – Follow Up	24 Oct	Letter to Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance
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3.3 Procurement Scrutiny Inquiry Follow Up

3.3.1 The Committee should note the outcome of the Procurement Inquiry follow up meeting on 24 October, which looked at progress with implementation of Scrutiny recommendations and impact of the inquiry. Cabinet decision on the Inquiry recommendations was made in October 2022. All 14 recommendations were agreed, with an action plan being agreed by Cabinet. Having received a report to support the follow up and following discussion with the lead Cabinet Member / officers, the Inquiry Panel has decided it can conclude formal monitoring of the inquiry recommendations.

3.3.2 The Panel were happy with the progress made to date and were pleased to hear about the positive impact that the Inquiry has made. They heard that:

- As a result of the Inquiry the profile of the matters raised by the Panel has increased significantly, across the entire Council, from those working on climate change matters through to Audit, for example, as well as at senior management level, so the Panel's focus and interest has highlighted the importance of the matters reviewed, particularly the work area's ability to be a driver of and an agent of important change.
- Wider trends have been magnified by the Panel's focus and there has been a high degree of alignment between the Panel's focus and Cabinet's response and thus a general commitment to the direction of travel articulated, showing the strategic alignment of the work and its importance to the future of the Council's operation and impact on its wider environment.

3.3.3 The Panel heard about the progress being made across all the recommendations, including for example:

- In relation to Recommendation 1, 2, 3 and 4 a process to ensure the outcomes in relation to social justice, localism, biodiversity and the natural environment are recorded and reported upon, is in the process of being developed. The Panel heard that both the Welsh and UK governments are also looking at this and that the process put in place in Swansea with dovetail with this work.
- A Schools Guide to Procurement has been developed in conjunction with schools and has now been published and is being used in schools across Swansea.

3.3.4 The Panel agreed to conclude formal follow up of the Inquiry after satisfying themselves that good progress has been made with all the recommendations. They heard that 9 of the recommendations are now complete and that good progress has been made with those recommendations that are outstanding. They were reassured to hear

that all the necessary pieces are in place to ensure ongoing improvement in those areas where the recommendations are incomplete.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Letters Log – 2023-24

Appendix 2: Scrutiny Letters / Responses