Scrutiny Annual Report
2018/19

Scrutiny Programme Committee
City and County of Swansea - Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Contents

1. Chair's Foreword

Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

I am proud to present our second annual report of this Council term, as Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

Scrutiny is a vital part of local democracy and good governance. This report reflects on the range of different activities carried out by scrutiny councillors over the past year to make sure the work of the Council is accountable and transparent, effective and efficient, and helps the Council to achieve its objectives and drive improvement, by questioning and providing challenge to decision-makers.

Our report focuses on how scrutiny has made a difference for a better Swansea, and our efforts to support the continuous improvement of scrutiny practice here, building on the positive review of our scrutiny arrangements last year by the Wales Audit Office.

Measuring the performance of scrutiny in a meaningful way is not particularly easy, however we have tried to take a 'results based' approach to tell you about:

- How much scrutiny we did
- How well we did it
- How much scrutiny affected the business of the Council
- What the outcomes of scrutiny were

We hope that this report provides you with assurance and confidence that councillors involved in scrutiny are contributing to better services, policies and decisions, and a better Swansea.

Finally, I must give my thanks to all of the councillors who have led or participated in scrutiny over the past year. I look forward to reporting again on achievements in 12 months!

2. Swansea Scrutiny Results Scorecard 2018-19

Scrutiny Practice	**A. How much scrutiny did we do?**	**B. How well did we do?**
	1. Number of Committee meetings = 14 ↑ (13) 2. Number of Panel & Working Group meetings = 95 ↟ (69) 3. Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 1 ↔ (1) 4. Number of Working Group topics completed = 8 ↟ (7)	5. Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 69% ↑ (68%) 6. Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 71% ↓ (80%) 7. Meetings with public observers = 49% ↟ (20%) 8. Meetings with public input = 27% ↟ (11%) 9. Meetings attracting media coverage = 32% ↟ (7%)
Scrutiny Outcomes	**C. How much did scrutiny affect the business of the Council?**	**D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?**
	10. Number of chairs letters sent to cabinet members = 64 ↑ (63) 11. Average time for Cabinet Member response letter = 20 days ↑ (19) 12. Letters responded to within 21 day target = 63% ↓ (71%) 13. Number of scrutiny reports to Cabinet = 2 ↑ (1) 14. Cabinet Action plans agreed = 1 ↓ (2) 15. Follow ups undertaken = 2 ↓ (4) 16. Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre decision scrutiny = 8 ↓ (12) 17. Number of Cabinet reports subject to Call-in = 1 18. Cabinet members who attended at least one question and answer session at the Scrutiny Programme Committee = 100% ↔ (100%)	19. Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = 100% ↑ (92%) 20. Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 56% ↡ (74%)

(Last year in brackets) ↡↟ = notable change, ↓↑ = small change, ↔ no change

3. About the Indicators

In the past few years, we have reported on key results from our annual councillor and stakeholder survey. We did not carry out this survey during 2018-2019 due to resources. The survey includes asking whether people feel that:

- they have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny
- scrutiny arrangements are working well
- the scrutiny work programme balances community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance
- scrutiny activities are well-planned
- non-executive members have good opportunities to participate in scrutiny
- scrutiny provides regular challenge to decision-makers
- scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the Council; and,
- the level of support provided by the Scrutiny Team is either excellent or very good.

Last year's results were very positive and we hope that we will be able to carry out the survey during 2019/20 for the next annual report, to reflect on these important questions. However, we think that the evidence in this annual report reflects well on these aims.

A number of new measures have been included this year, which we feel improves the suite of indicators and provides a better picture of scrutiny work, achievements and impact. This includes showing the response from Cabinet Members to the various scrutiny letters, and the level of press and public engagement.

A. How much scrutiny did we do?

3.1 Number of Committee meetings = 14

The Council has a single overarching Scrutiny Committee, called the Scrutiny Programme Committee, which met 14 times during the 2018-19 municipal year.

The Committee is responsible for developing and managing the overall Scrutiny Work Programme. Overarching priorities were shaped by the annual work planning conference, which took place in June 2018 (open to all non-executive councillors), that heard a

range of perspectives on what should be included. All councillors can suggest particular topics of concern for possible scrutiny. The councillor-led 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 scrutiny time and resources.

Specific scrutiny activities included in the work programme are carried out either by the Committee or by establishing informal Panels and Working Groups. All meetings are held in public.

Formal committee meetings for scrutiny give councillors the opportunity to hold cabinet members to account and provide challenge on a range of policy and service issues.

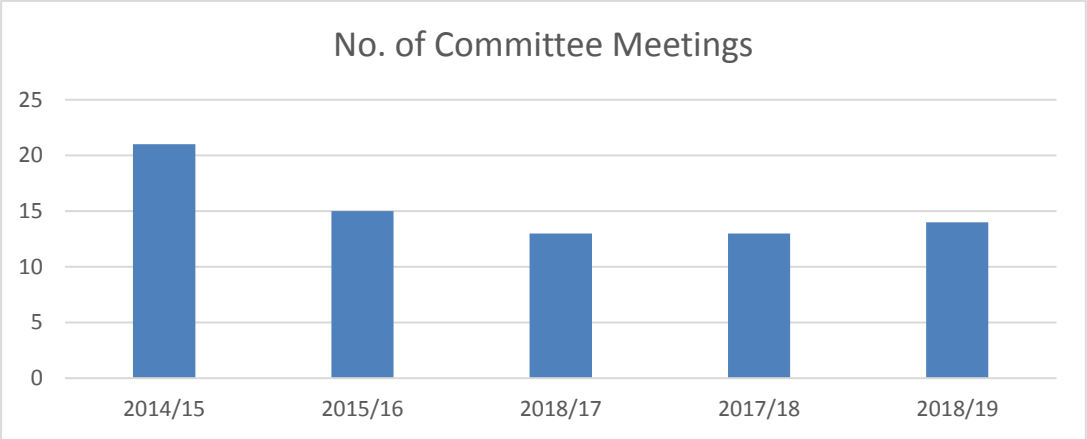
This included holding structured Question & Answer sessions with cabinet members to explore their work, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

The following topics were also examined by the Committee:

- Scrutiny Improvement & Development Objectives
- Swansea Bay City Deal Joint Scrutiny Committee
- Wales Audit Office Report – Overview & Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?
- Consultation on Draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022
- Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report
- Children & Young People's Rights Scheme – Compliance & Progress
- Wales Audit Office Reports to Scrutiny
- Sustainable Swansea Programme - Commissioning Reviews: Service Areas Post Implementation Updates
- Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan (Wales Audit Office Report – Overview & Scrutiny: Fit for the Future? & Improvement Objectives)

The Committee is also the Council's designated committee for Crime & Disorder Scrutiny and a meeting to discuss the performance of the local Community Safety Partnership, the Safer Swansea Partnership, took place in April 2019.

Comparison with previous years:



3.2 Number of Panel & Working Group meetings = 95

It is important that the Scrutiny Work Programme strikes a balance between community concerns and strategic issues. The Committee will consider what specific topics should feature in the programme so that it is focusses on the right things.

Most of the work of scrutiny is delegated to informal topic based Panels and Working Groups. Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups are established by the Scrutiny Programme Committee, with an appointed convener (chair), to carry out specific scrutiny activities. There are two types of panels:

Inquiry Panels - these undertake in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis.

Topics examined during 2018-19:	Convener
• Natural Environment Key Question: What should Swansea Council be doing to maintain, enhance and promote its natural environment and biodiversity, and in doing so promote the resilience of eco-systems?	Cllr. Peter Jones
• Equalities Key Question: How effectively is the Council meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Duty for Wales)?	Cllr Louise Gibbard

Performance Panels - these provide in-depth performance / financial monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas.

Performance Panels 2018-19:	Convener
• Service Improvement & Finance (monthly) • Adult Services (monthly) • Schools* (monthly) • Child & Family Services (every two months) • Development & Regeneration (every two months) • Public Services Board (quarterly)	Cllr. Chris Holley Cllr. Peter Black Cllr. Mo Sykes Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams Cllr. Jeff Jones Cllr. Mary Jones

* since May 2019 the Panel is now known as the Education Performance Panel and Cllr Lyndon Jones is the new convener after Cllr Mo Sykes stood down

Working Groups are one-off meetings established to enable a 'light-touch' approach to specific topics of concern.

Working Groups 2018-19:	Convener
• Homelessness (carried over from 2017/18) • Community Cohesion & Hate Crime (carried over from 2017/18) • Air & Noise Pollution • Welfare Reform • Environmental Enforcement • Local Flood Risk Management (meets annually) • Anti-Social Behaviour • Tourism	Cllr Peter Black Cllr Louise Gibbard Cllr Joe Hale Cllr Louise Gibbard Cllr Jeff Jones Cllr Peter Jones Cllr Terry Hennegan Cllr Peter Jones

3.3 Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 1

Work on the following in-depth inquiry was completed during 2018-19:

- Natural Environment: *What should Swansea Council be doing to maintain, enhance and promote its natural environment and biodiversity, and in doing so promote the resilience of eco-systems?*

3.4 Number of Working Group topics completed = 8

Work on the following topics was completed during 2018-19 through meetings of Working Groups:

- Homelessness (carried over from 2017/18)
- Community Cohesion & Hate Crime (carried over from 2017/18)
- Air & Noise Pollution
- Welfare Reform
- Environmental Enforcement
- Local Flood Risk Management (meets annually)
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Tourism

B. How well did we do?

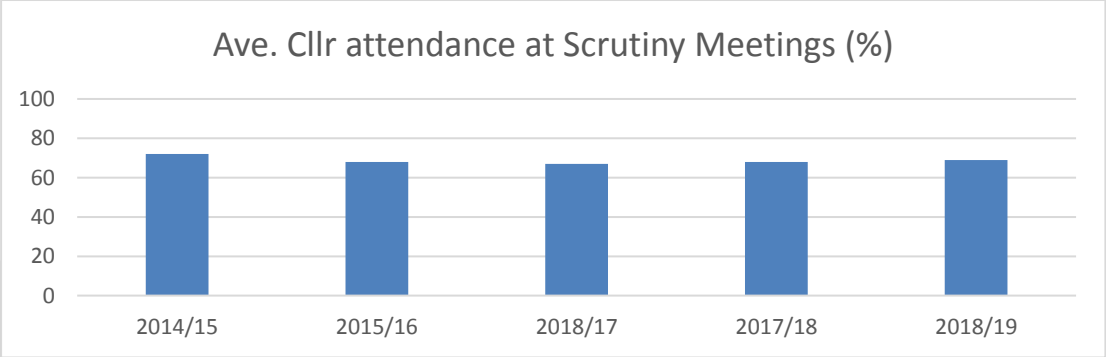
3.5 Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 69%

The rate of councillor attendance measures an important aspect of effectiveness as it reflects the engagement of councillors in the scrutiny process.

The membership of the Scrutiny Programme Committee is determined by Council. However, membership of the various informal Panels and Working Groups is based on interest shown by councillors in the topics under scrutiny. Based on expressions of interest the membership of panels and working groups is determined by the Committee.

Attendance figures for councillors are collected by the Council's Democratic Services Team and published on the Council's website. 2018/19's figure is an overall attendance figure that includes the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Panel meetings and the Working Groups.

Comparison with previous years:

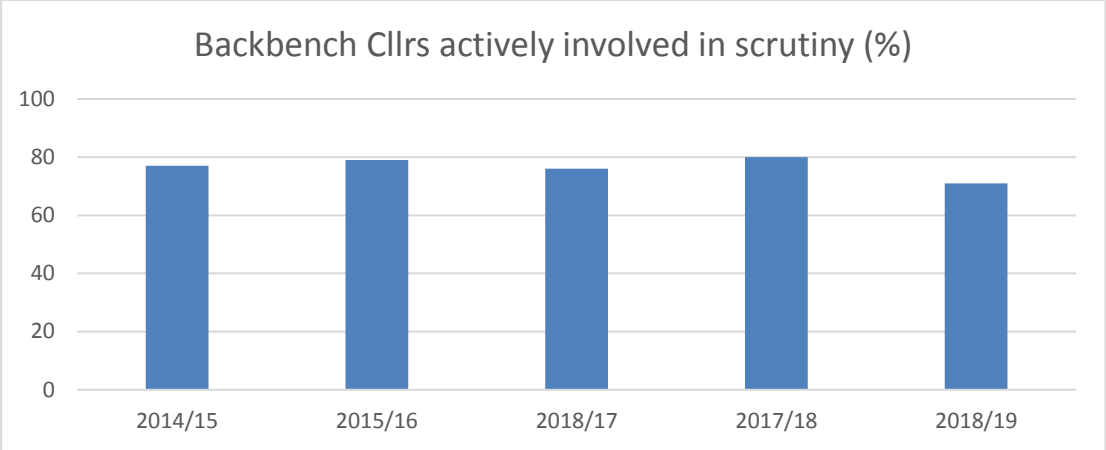


3.6 Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 71%

All backbench councillors have the opportunity to participate in scrutiny work regardless of committee membership. New scrutiny topics, once agreed, were advertised to all non-executive councillors and expressions of interest sought to lead and/or participate in these activities. It enables councillors to participate based on interest, and enables them to build up specialist expertise.

The large majority of backbench councillors were involved in scrutiny either through the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Panels or Working Groups.

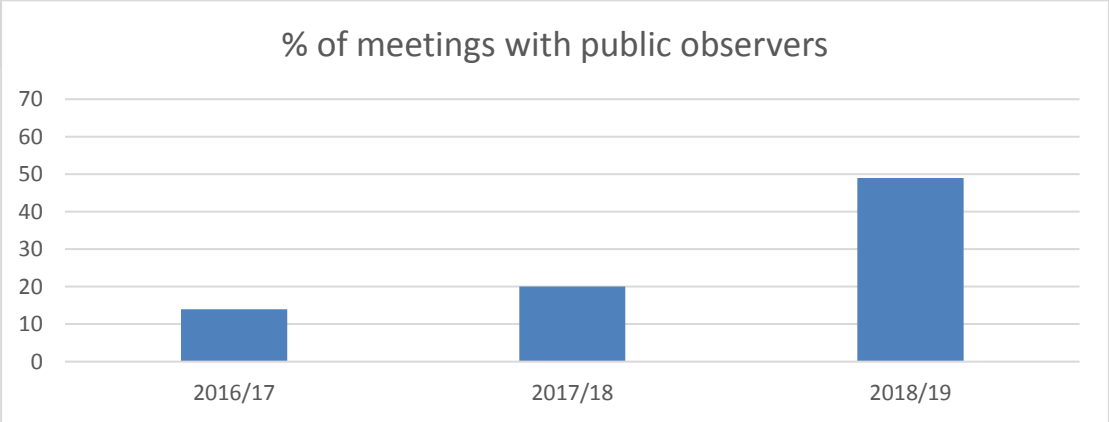
Comparison with previous years:



3.7 Meetings with public observers = 49%

Scrutiny is important as a mechanism for community engagement. All scrutiny meetings, whether the Committee or Panels and Working Group, are conducted in public, subject to specific item of business which contain exempt information. Of the 109 scrutiny meetings held during 2018/9, almost half of these were observed by persons in the public gallery, which indicates there is a significant focus of scrutiny on matters of public interest. Amongst those with the highest percentage of meetings observed were the Equalities Inquiry, Adult Services Performance Panel, Public Services Board Performance Panel, Natural Environment Inquiry, and Development & Regeneration Performance Panel.

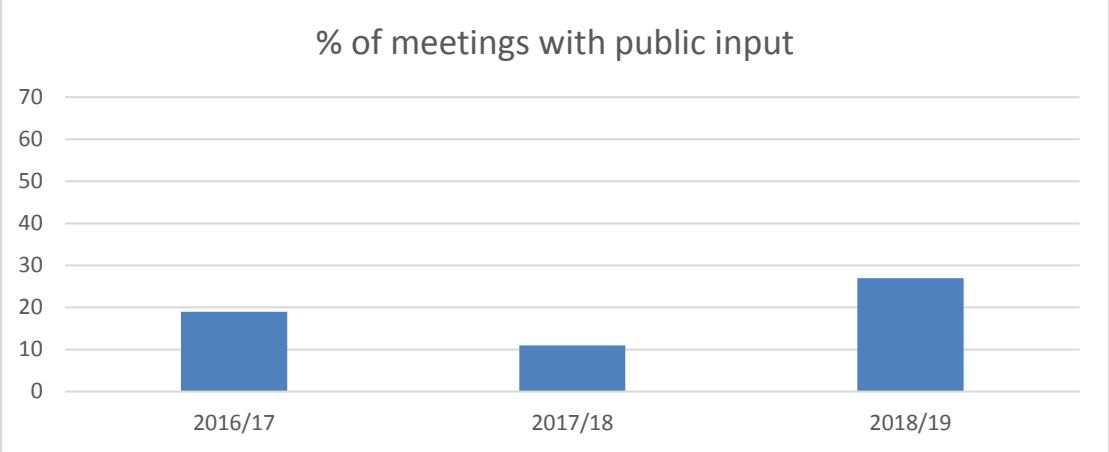
Comparison with previous years:



3.8 Meetings with public input = 27%

As well as attracting interest and observers to listen to what is being discussed, councillors are keen to increase active public involvement in the work of scrutiny. 27% of all scrutiny meetings had some form of such engagement and public input. This input can take various forms, including submission of questions for scrutiny sessions with cabinet members, making suggestions for the scrutiny work programme, contributing evidence to specific items under scrutiny - whether in person or reflected in the meeting agenda. The Equalities Inquiry benefitted from a high level of engagement with a range of groups / networks who represent people with protected characteristics. Other meetings which saw good levels of public input include the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Schools Performance Panel, and Adult Services Panel.

Comparison with previous years:

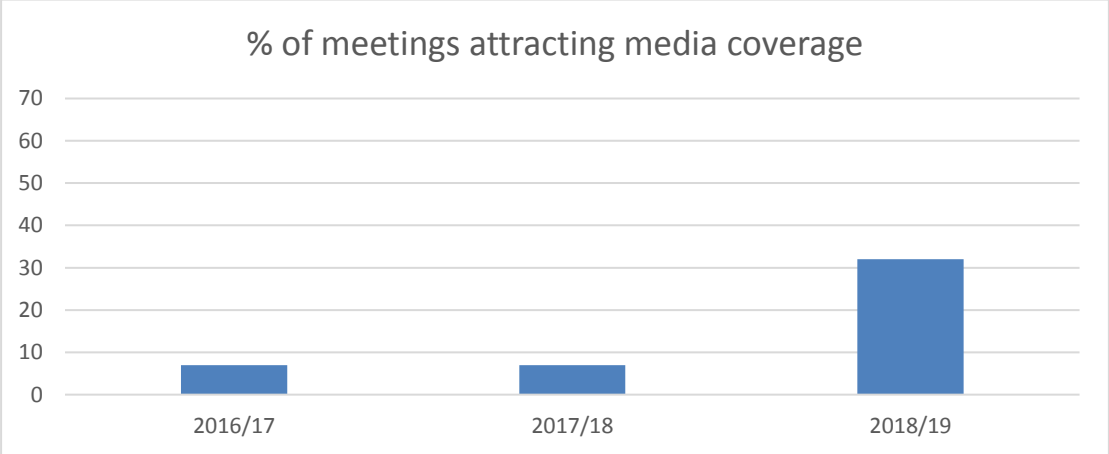


3.9 Meetings attracting media coverage = 31%

As well as attracting interest from individuals and getting members of the public to engage directly, a measure of whether scrutiny is focussed on the right things and is making an impact is the amount of media coverage that scrutiny is attracting. We found that 32% of scrutiny meetings made the news. The work of the Adult Services Performance Panel, Scrutiny Programme Committee, Natural Environment Inquiry Panel, and Development & Regeneration Performance attracted the most media interest. Across all activities there were at least 35 scrutiny discussions reported in the local press (print and on-line). Issues, which generated coverage, included: the Natural Environment, Council Housing & Housebuilding, Future of Leisure Services, Charges for Council

Services, Homelessness, Green Energy & Transport, Costs of Adult Social Care, Waste Disposal & Recycling, Care Homes, School Funding, City Centre Regeneration, Adoption, School Closures, HMOs / Student Accommodation, Fly Tipping, Community Safety, and Care Homes for Looked After Children.

Comparison with previous years:

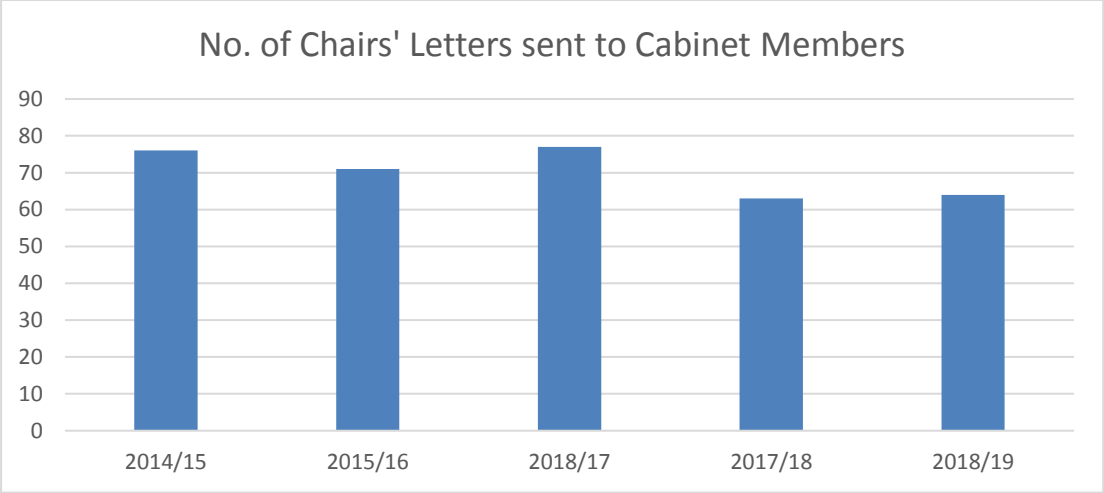


C. How much did scrutiny affect the business of the Council?

3.10 Number of chairs letters sent to cabinet members = 64

Chairs letters are an established part of the scrutiny process in Swansea. They allow the Committee and Panel meetings / Working Groups to communicate quickly and efficiently directly with relevant cabinet members. They will send letters to raise concerns, recognise good practice, ask for further information and make recommendations for improvement, reflecting the discussion at Committee / Panel / Working Group meetings. Letters are effectively 'mini-reports' with conclusions and proposals from scrutiny – and where necessary require a response. 64 letters were sent to Cabinet Members during 2018-19.

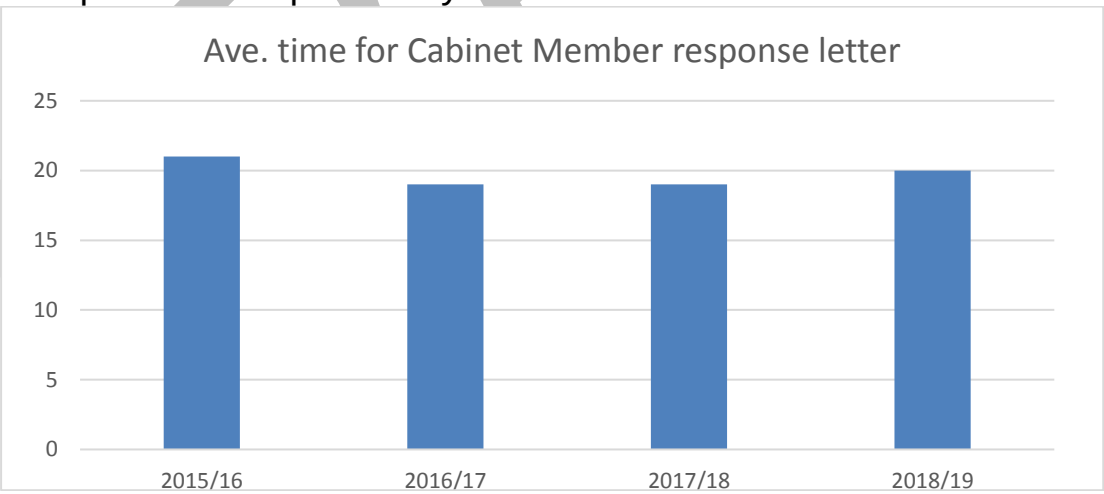
Comparison with previous years:



3.11 Average time for Cabinet Member response letter = 20 days

When scrutiny letters are sent to Cabinet Members and require a response Cabinet Members are required to respond within 21 calendar days. The average response time for letters sent during 2018-19 was 20 days, which indicates that scrutiny is generally getting a timely response to views, concerns, and any suggested action for Cabinet Members.

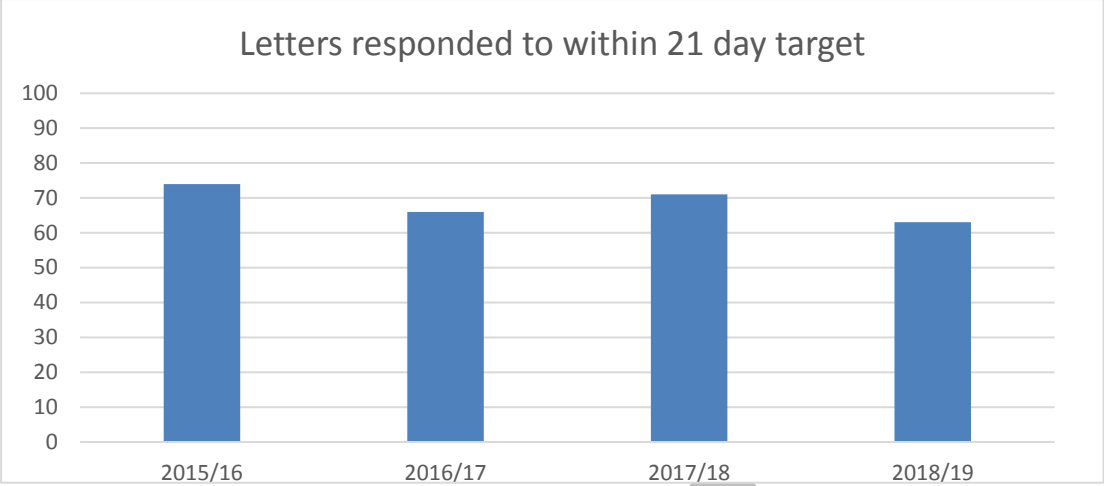
Comparison with previous years:



3.12 Letters responded to within 21 day target = 63%

Whilst the response to scrutiny letters was on average 20 days, some letters did take longer. The number of letters responded to within the 21 day target was 63% (22 out of 35 letters).

Comparison with previous years:

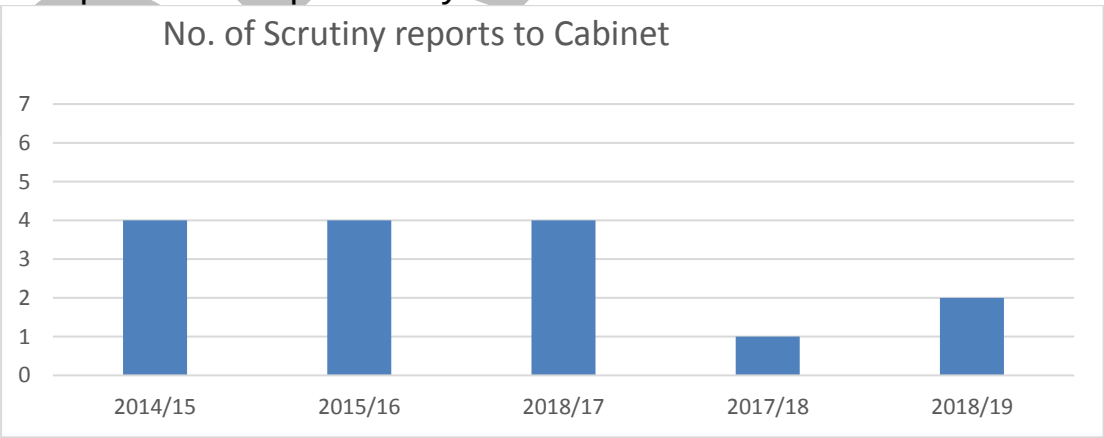


3.13 Number of Scrutiny reports to Cabinet = 2

In-depth inquiries are reported to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations agreed by scrutiny and action plan on how the recommendations will be implemented. The following in-depth reviews were reported to Cabinet from scrutiny with the number of recommendations from each shown:

Inquiry	Convener	Report to Cabinet	No. of Recommendations
Regional Working	Cllr Lyndon Jones	June 2018	11
Natural Environment	Cllr Peter Jones	March 2019	20

Comparison with previous years:

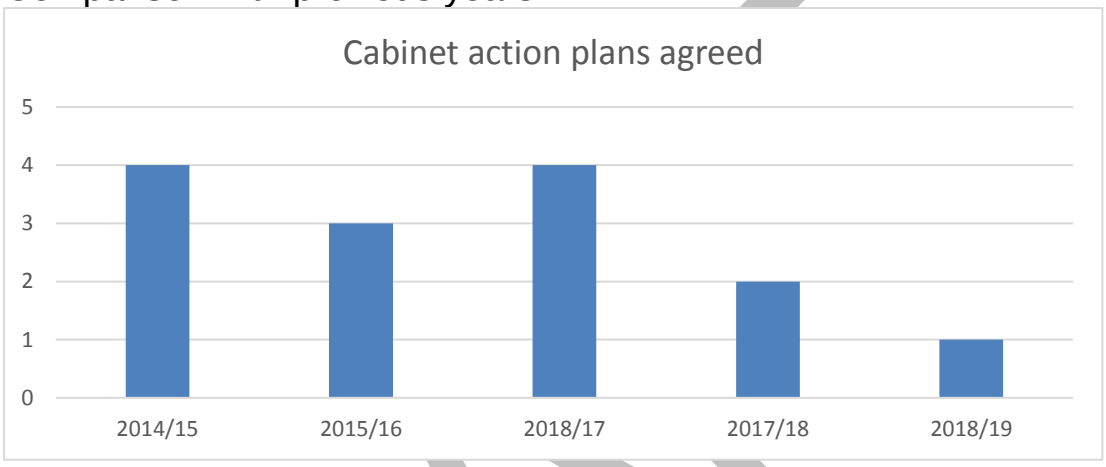


3.14 Cabinet action plans agreed = 1

Once recommendations and an action plan have been agreed by cabinet, scrutiny will follow up on progress with implementation and impact. The following action plans were agreed following in-depth inquiries that were originally carried out during 2017-18:

- Regional Working (Cabinet meeting August 2018) – all 11 recommendations were accepted.

Comparison with previous years:



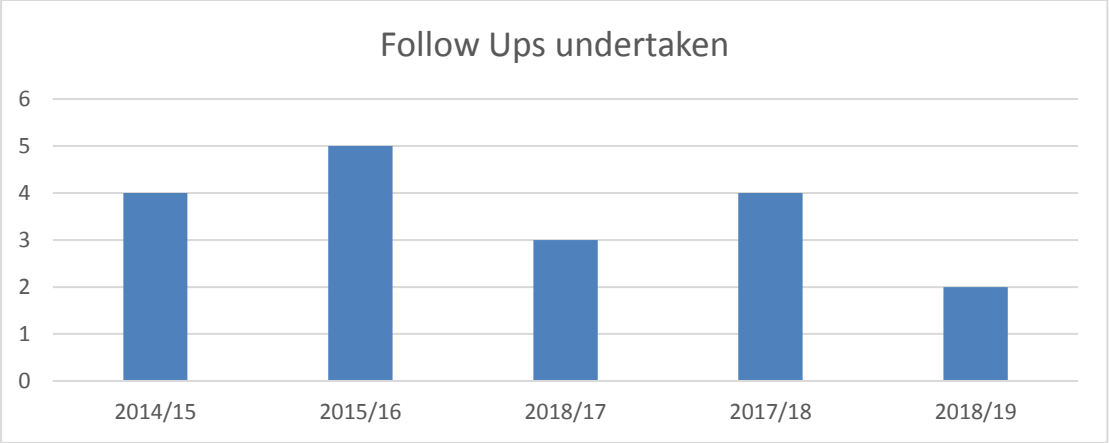
3.15 Follow ups undertaken = 2

Inquiry Panels reconvene to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and cabinet action plans, and assess the impact of their work. A meeting will usually be held 6-12 months following cabinet decision, with a further follow up arranged if required.

In order to check whether the agreed action plans have been carried out, scrutiny will ask for follow up reports from cabinet members. If councillors are satisfied they can then conclude the work for that inquiry. Both previous scrutiny inquiries that required a follow up during 2018-19 were followed up:

Inquiry	Convener	Monitoring Status
Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services	Cllr. Mary Jones	Complete
Tackling Poverty	Cllr Sybil Crouch	Complete

Comparison with previous years:



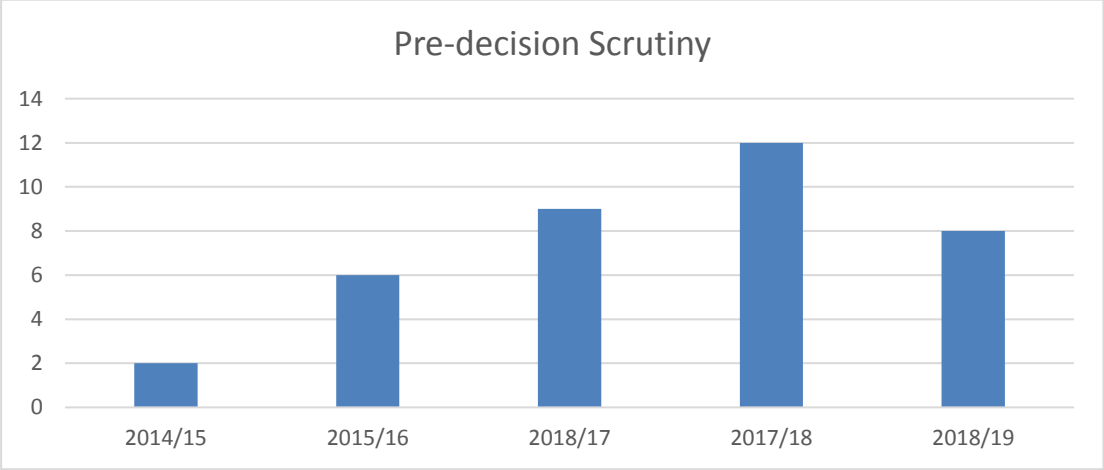
3.16 Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre-decision scrutiny = 8

Pre-decision scrutiny involves scrutiny councillors considering cabinet reports before cabinet makes a final decision. Taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications, the following 8 cabinet reports were subject to pre-decision scrutiny (carried out by the Committee or relevant Performance Panels), with views reported to Cabinet before decisions were taken:

Report	Cabinet Member	Cabinet Meeting	Undertaken by
More Homes Parc Yr Helyg Site Options Appraisal	Homes & Energy	21 Jun 2018	Committee
Cultural Services Commissioning Review	Investment, Regeneration & Tourism	21 Jun 2018	Service Improvement & Finance Panel
The Future Structure and Delivery of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit	Education Improvement, Learning & Skills	19 Jul 2018	Schools Panel
Outcome of Residential Care & Day Services for Older People Consultation	Care, Health & Ageing Well	20 Sep 2018	Adult Services Panel
Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022	Homes & Energy	15 Nov 2018	Committee
Swansea Central Phase 1 Project Update and FPR7	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	29 Nov 2018	Service Improvement & Finance Panel
Small School Review & School Organisation Linked to the Welsh Education Strategic Plan	Education Improvement, Learning & Skills	20 Dec 2018	Schools Panel

Budget	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	14 Feb 2019	Service Improvement & Finance Panel

Comparison with previous years:



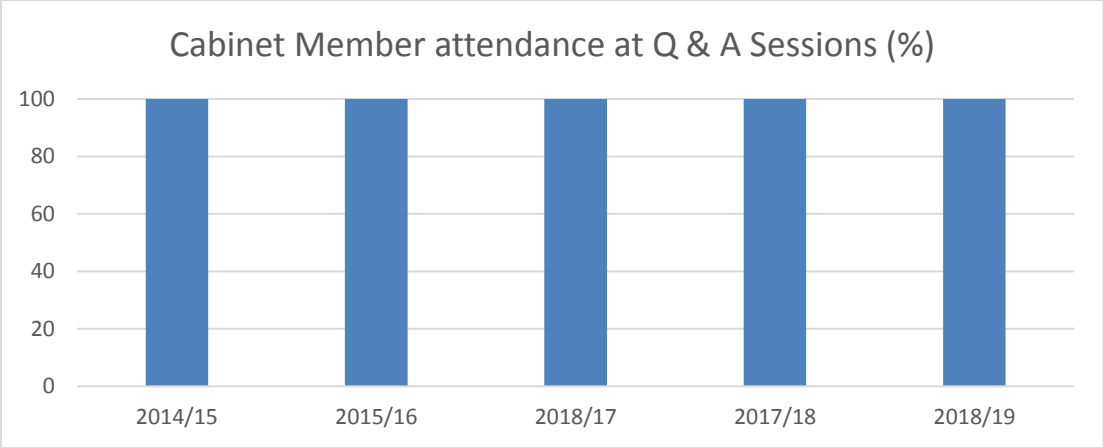
3.17 Number of Cabinet reports subject to Call-in = 1

During 2018-19 the Council agreed new call-in arrangements with scrutiny at the centre of the process. Any valid call-in of cabinet decisions leads to the calling of a special meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. A call-in can be made by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee or by any four councillors by giving notice in writing to the Head of Democratic Services within a specific call-in period. With the increase in pre-decision scrutiny seen over the last few years a large number of call-ins are not anticipated. However, one cabinet report was subject to call-in over the past year, concerning cabinet decision on 21st Century Schools Programme - New Build For Gorseinon Primary School.

3.18 Cabinet members who attended at least one question and answer session at the Scrutiny Programme Committee – 100%

Cabinet members attend scrutiny meetings to answer questions and provide information. Cabinet attendance at scrutiny meetings is a good indicator that the 'holding to account' role of scrutiny is functioning well. In 2018/19 every Cabinet Member attended at least one question and answer session at the Scrutiny Programme Committee, enabling the committee to explore their work, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact. It ensures that scrutiny provides regular challenge to decision-makers.

Comparison with previous years:

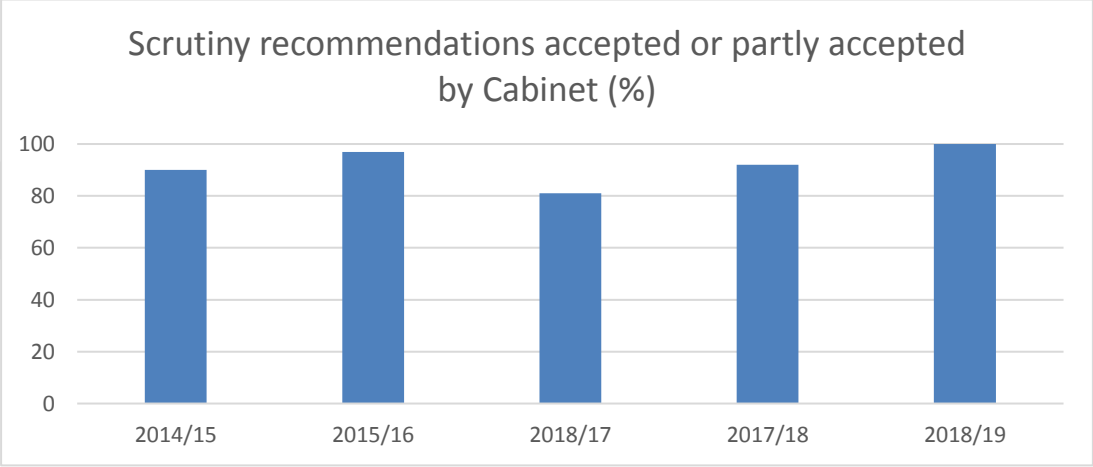


D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?

3.19 Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = 100%

The rate that cabinet accept scrutiny recommendations is a good indicator of whether scrutiny is making strong recommendations based on robust evidence. Cabinet responded to 11 scrutiny inquiry recommendations in 2018-19 which were all accepted.

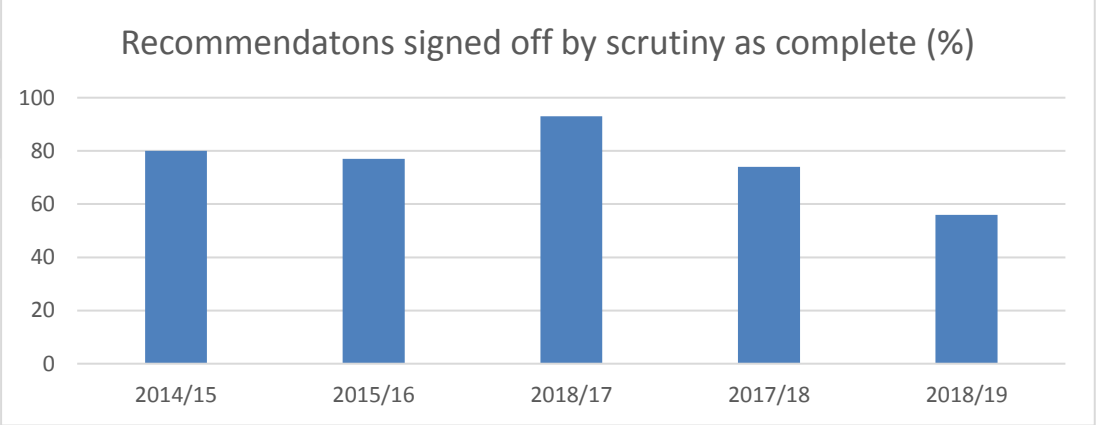
Comparison with previous years:



3.20 Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 56%

When follow up reports are presented to scrutiny (usually within 12 months following original cabinet decision) they detail which of the recommendations from the in depth inquiry (or other scrutiny report) have been completed in line with the cabinet member's action plan and which have not. In the case of in-depth inquiries scrutiny councillors consider whether they agree with the assessment about implementation of recommendations, taking into account the evidence they are presented with about the changes that have happened following scrutiny and its impact. This indictor represents the percentage of recommendations accepted by scrutiny as being completed for the year, and relates to the follow up of recommendation made by the Tackling Poverty Inquiry and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services Inquiry (27 recommendations were considered of which 15 were considered as complete). In respect of the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services although pleased with progress the Panel recognised that there is some way to go to implement all of the recommendations and achieving significant improvement. The Panel agreed to conclude formal monitoring however it was agreed that the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel was best placed for continued monitoring of CAMHS.

Comparison with previous years:



4. Impact

4.1 How Scrutiny Councillors have made a difference

4.1.1 Scrutiny Councillors make a difference by:

- Ensuring that Cabinet Members (and other decision-makers) are held to account through public question and answer sessions
- Making evidence based proposals on topics of concern through task and finish Scrutiny Inquiry Panels that report to Cabinet
- Monitoring and challenging service performance and improvement through standing Scrutiny Performance Panels
- Addressing issues of concern through one off working groups
- Acting as a 'check' on the key decisions through pre-decision scrutiny and call-in
- Communicating concerns and proposals for improvement through regular publication of scrutiny letters and reports

4.1.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee produced a quarterly summary of the headlines from the work of scrutiny for council and the public, which focussed on impact and how scrutiny is making a difference. The Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee reports the summary, known as Scrutiny Dispatches, to Council.

4.1.3 It is important to know that the work and the efforts of scrutiny councillors are having a positive impact and are delivering effective scrutiny. We make sure that the recommendations we make, in whatever scrutiny forum, are followed up to check on implementation and assess the impact of this work.

4.1.4 The difference made and impact of the overall work of scrutiny is also communicated via:

- press releases to the local media;
- regular posts to our Swansea Scrutiny blog;
- an email monthly subscription newsletter; and
- use of social media, including Twitter.

4.1.5 A selection of stories from the past year of scrutiny from Scrutiny Dispatches, which demonstrate the impact made, are ***appended***. This includes reference to:

- **Developing Regional Working** *(Regional Working Inquiry)*
- **Promoting Community Cohesion** *(Community Cohesion Working Group)*
- **Tackling Poverty** *(Tackling Poverty Inquiry)*
- **Improving Scrutiny** *(Scrutiny Programme Committee)*
- **Helping to shape the Council's new Homelessness Strategy** *(Homelessness Working Group / Scrutiny Programme Committee)*
- **Reducing Air & Noise Pollution** *(Air & Noise Pollution Working Group)*
- **Improving Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services** *(Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services Inquiry)*
- **Maintaining & Enhancing Our Natural Environment** *(Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry)*
- **Improving Community Safety** *(Scrutiny Programme Committee)*
- **Dealing with Welfare Reform** *(Welfare Reform Working Group)*
- **Managing Environmental Enforcement** *(Environmental Enforcement Working Group)*

5. Feedback and Improvement

5.1 Improving Scrutiny

5.1.1 It is good practice for those involved in the scrutiny function to undertake regular self-evaluation of this work. Taking into account characteristics of effective scrutiny and experiences it is important for the continuous improvement of the function that any issues identified about current scrutiny practice are discussed and addressed. Annual review discussions are held within the Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Performance Panels.

5.1.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee attended an 'Improvement & Development' workshop in May 2018 as part of the process to identify improvement objectives for scrutiny for the year ahead. They reviewed findings from the Scrutiny Annual Survey carried out in early 2018 and in particular shared views on where things could be better, as well as reflecting on their own experience, and other feedback received throughout the year.

5.1.3 Members reflected positively on:

- Inquiry Panels – felt to be well supported and work well, allowing a lot of ground to be covered, with a high level of external / public engagement (leading to more vibrant scrutiny), and produces results
- Performance Panels – recognised as the bedrock of the scrutiny work programme, allowing time and space to explore performance in some detail
- The support provided by officers in the Scrutiny Team.

The Committee also agreed:

- Adjustment to the work programme to improve alignment with Council priorities / Corporate Plan and enable monitoring of the delivery of the Council's commitments around natural environment & biodiversity
- The Committee's Cabinet Member Q & A Sessions could be improved by focussing on a small number of key issues, rather than an overall look at portfolio responsibilities.

- Standing Performance Panels should be asked to appoint the convener, rather than be determined by the Scrutiny Programme Committee.
- Budget scrutiny remains an area for development

5.1.4 From the self-evaluation and reflection emerged a clear sense about what priorities for improving scrutiny should be. This related to: Councillor involvement in scrutiny; reports to cabinet and reporting arrangements, Cabinet engagement in scrutiny / tracking their response to scrutiny, visibility of impact, and public engagement.

5.2 Scrutiny Improvement Objectives

5.2.1 The following Improvement Objectives were subsequently agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Committee:

1. We need more of our work to be reported to Cabinet so that there is more formal consideration of scrutiny conclusions and recommendations.
2. We need to be involved at an earlier stage in proposed Cabinet decisions so that our input can be more meaningful.
3. We need to increase opportunities for participation so that more councillors can get involved in the work of scrutiny.
4. We need to strengthen follow up of all scrutiny recommendations so that the response and difference made can be assessed.
5. We need more coverage in the media so that people are more aware of our work

5.2.2 In order to address both Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement (issued in July 2018 following their review of our scrutiny arrangements), and specific issues identified by the scrutiny councillors, the Scrutiny Programme Committee reflected on priorities and agreed an action plan in January 2019 to help deliver the clear set of Scrutiny Improvement Objectives. This means having a co-ordinated and comprehensive single improvement plan for scrutiny, for the issues that matter most.

5.2.3 This has already resulted in improvements to the scrutiny process and its effectiveness, and efforts are being made in a number of areas to support councillors, take practice forward and improve the quality of scrutiny, for example:

1. Councillor Participation

Whilst there is a healthy level of engagement we want to ensure all scrutiny councillors have opportunity to participate so we are trying to understand whether there are any barriers to councillor participation in scrutiny and see what can be done to facilitate the engagement of those not actively involved. We recognise that councillors have a range of demands on their time and it may not be possible for all to be actively engaged, but it is important to remove any barriers that might exist.

2. Training & Development

We are considering what needs doing to develop scrutiny councillors in their role. We have already asked councillors to identify the areas where skills could be improved. The following areas could be usefully explored: Chairing Skills; Questioning Skills; Public Participation; Ad-hoc briefings to improve knowledge of Council services / working, as well as refresher session(s) on the Scrutiny Process. There may be other areas that need to be developed, such as understanding around the Well-being of Future Generations Act and how scrutiny can support its impact on local services, policies and decision-making. We will look at how best to develop and deliver a training & development programme for scrutiny councillors and it is work in progress for 2019/20.

3. Reporting to Cabinet

There are now more opportunities for scrutiny councillors to report their findings and recommendations directly to Cabinet. Whilst we have a well-established practice of writing letters to Cabinet Members, sometimes this work may merit formal reporting to Cabinet because of the issues that have been raised following scrutiny and / or implications across cabinet portfolios. This means that Scrutiny Working Groups and Scrutiny Performance Panels can consider whether reporting to Cabinet is necessary, for formal response.

4. Pre-decision Scrutiny

We have been calling for more time to consider proposed cabinet reports to enable the more meaningful involvement of scrutiny members in the decision-making process, as a 'critical friend'. Early sight to such reports will also enable more time for Cabinet to think about any issues and concerns that may be flagged up by scrutiny. When it sees each Cabinet Member, the Scrutiny Programme Committee encourages them to share information about future key

decisions that the Committee may want to discuss to challenge and inform decision-making. Cabinet Members are also encouraged to build in time for a 'scrutiny stage' as a sounding board for significant decisions at an early stage in the process. Scrutiny engagement with the Council's new Homelessness Strategy was a good example of early influence.

5. Scrutiny Impact

We have been increasing visibility of the impact of scrutiny through regular stories published via our Scrutiny Blog, Newsletter, and Dispatches, as well as in reports to the Scrutiny Programme Committee. We have also improved the Scrutiny Annual Report to reflect more about scrutiny activity and impact. Scrutiny Working Group recommendations are being monitored by the Scrutiny Programme Committee to assess impact / outcomes, with input from respective conveners, who themselves can act as rapporteurs and liaise informally with cabinet members and relevant officers to keep abreast of progress. However, we will try to do more to strengthen the evaluation of impact and outcomes of scrutiny activity. We will identify performance indicators and measureable outcomes relevant to topics for scrutiny that could help evidence change / difference following scrutiny. We will also develop mechanisms for feedback from Cabinet Members, Officers, and other stakeholders about impact e.g. post-meeting evaluation; via Annual Survey etc.

6. Roles & Responsibilities

We are mindful to ensure there are no issues of duplication between scrutiny and Policy Development Committee activity or negative impact on the role and work of scrutiny. There were no issues of overlap or adverse effect on scrutiny, and should any issues arise in the future these will be addressed through dialogue between the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and relevant Policy Development Committee Chair(s). We have made sure that the Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Performance Panel Conveners are aware of Policy Development Committee agendas and work plans. The Committee already has a well-established relationship with the Audit Committee to ensure respective work plans are coordinated to avoid duplication or gaps.

7. Public Engagement

We are working more closely with the Council's Communications Team to identify opportunities to raise awareness and promote public engagement in scrutiny, and generate more media coverage of scrutiny activities. There is now more dialogue between teams about the work programme and upcoming meetings. Communications staff are signposted to scrutiny agendas / information to facilitate more about scrutiny being reported in the media and increase awareness / public engagement. Media coverage of scrutiny has increased significantly over the past year due to active local government press reporting, leading to stories in print and on-line media (South Wales Evening Post, Wales Online, and Western Mail). The Scrutiny Team continue to develop a social media presence including Swansea Scrutiny blog, Twitter, and there are plans to develop a Facebook page which may provide an effective way to promoting the role, activities, impact of scrutiny and enable interaction.

5.2.4 We will reflect on the delivery of the action plan and achievements against agreed improvement issues and objectives in next year's annual report.

5.3 Feedback from Scrutiny Performance Panels

5.3.1 Performance Panels each reflected on the year and amongst notable observations were the following:

a) **Schools:**

- Panel's work means being able to keep abreast of changes and challenges in relation to education matters.
- Pleased with scrutiny of individual schools and visiting some schools to see the work happening on the ground and speaking to headteachers, staff, governors and pupils.
- Officers have told us that performance scrutiny has been challenging but constructive, especially the searching questions that have been asked around vulnerable learners, and it benefits the education department. Topics discussed have helped develop these services, particularly work in relation to Education Other Than at School and the Small Schools Review.
- Some learning points identified:
  - Co-ordination around planning for future school visits and timing

- More context around some subjects being discussed would be helpful.

b) **Adult Services**

- Good level of quality in the debate and commitment from Panel Members. The Panel has been persistent and brought things out into the open.
- Good level of support from staff.
- There has been real challenge to Cabinet Members and officers from the Council and Local Health Board. The engagement of health officials with the Panel has managed to unblock some of the issues.
- There has been some progress in respect of changing thinking on budget
- Panel is developing a better understanding of performance data, which is now more focused and detailed.
- Some learning points identified:
  - Visiting social services establishments and engaging directly with service users / user groups about their experience will provide Panel with a better perspective on performance.
  - Need to review how best to examine performance of the West Glamorgan Regional Partnership Heath & Social Care Programme.

c) **Child & Family Services**

- Good level of detail in performance reports.
- Panel is able to drill down into the detail and the officer contribution is very informative. Relationship with service officers good and very open.
- Debate has been good and happy with response Panel is getting from officers
- Pleased with officer support.

d) **Development & Regeneration**

- Pleased at the range of projects looked at by the Panel – will continue to have this variation in the coming year.
- The detail behind some projects is still opaque – Panel will continue to explore more throughout the coming year
- Some learning points identified:
  - More focus on the 'health' of the City Centre.

e) **Service Improvement & Finance**

- Panel happy with the mix of work this year, annual reports and one-off topics, with performance & financial monitoring the major role.
- Planning process is a topic of interest for the coming year

f) **Public Services Board**

- Good meetings particularly meeting with Future Generations Commissioner. Interactions with Future Generations Commissioner going very well.
- Some learning points identified:
  - More focus on direction of travel from each of the PSB objective areas needed, actions plans / delivery and clarity about outcomes

For further information:

Making the work of scrutiny more transparent and accessible

All scrutiny agenda packs are now available on the Council's 'agenda and minutes' webpage. There you can also find all scrutiny letters sent to cabinet members following meetings and responses. All scrutiny meetings are open to the public and anyone living or working in Swansea can suggest a topic for scrutiny. There are also opportunities to suggest questions, and submit views. If you would just like to keep an eye on what's going on we have webpages, a blog and a newsletter, you could even follow us on Twitter.

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