



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 19 December 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

M Jones
F D O'Brien

Councillor(s)

W G Lewis
S Pritchard

Councillor(s)

P N May
T M White

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)

Matt Callaghan	Economic Regeneration Manager
Lee Cambule	Tackling Poverty Service Manager
Amy Hawkins	Head of Adult Services & Tackling Poverty
Phil Holmes	Head of Planning & City Regeneration
Clare James	Senior Economic Development Manager
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader
Paul Relf	Strategic Economic Regeneration Manager
Anthony Richards	Poverty and Prevention Strategy and Development Manager
Debbie Smith	Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Mark Wade	Director of Place
Stephen Williams	Economic Regeneration Manager
Samantha Woon	Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:

Councillor A Anthony - Cabinet Member for Well-Being
Councillor Robert Francis-Davies – Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism
Councillor H Gwilliam - Cabinet Member for Community (Support)

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Davis and E W Fitzgerald

48 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

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

49 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.

50 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 14 November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

51 Public Question Time.

None.

52 Report on the Delivery of the Corporate Priority of Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities.

The Cabinet Member for Well-being provided a report which set out progress over the last 12 months in delivering the Corporate Priority of Tackling Poverty and Enabling Communities. In the latest version of the Corporate Plan, the Objective was amended to add 'Enabling Communities' to recognise a strengths base approach where the strengths of individuals, communities and networks can be capitalised upon to help tackle 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 Head of Adult Services & Tackling Poverty assisted by the Tackling Poverty Service Manager and Poverty and Prevention Strategy Development Manager, took the Committee through the report highlighting certain aspects, including the Corporate Plan 9 Steps and the Way Forward.

Committee questioning and discussions focussed on the following:

- Performance Framework - the progress in developing a strategic Tackling Poverty Performance Framework was detailed to define how the objectives, indicators, measures, and outputs relating to tackling poverty are aligned to outcomes. It was noted that some data exists however further work was required collating the more complex 'lived experience' data. The Committee was keen for greater clarity around what indicators mean in terms of impact of people and how this actually translates into reduced poverty, and outcomes from stated targets. Complexities of Tackling Poverty noted, with challenges with regard to refreshing data, performance framework outcomes, providing lived experiences and developing different ways of presenting poverty.

- Definition of Poverty – whilst the Minimum Income Standard according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for 2023 was £29,500, for a single person to provide a minimum acceptable standard of living, there was no single source of evidence that defined poverty. The definition of poverty was not merely related to income and broadening the definition was part of ongoing work.
- Poverty Data - discussion around the various sources of data, including how the Welsh Index of Deprivation is used and whether there has been much change over time; and around what can be learned from the Audit Wales Data Dashboard national online tool which is designed to support decision making in councils and improve how they target their work.
- Cost of Living – the Council had been monitoring the effectiveness and benefits of 'Cost of Living' grants for individuals and organisations, to ensure it has helped those who needed it.
- Building Community Assets – Opportunities with Work Experience and Volunteering. Examples discussed. Currently schools make referrals to Swansea Museum for opportunities with Work Experience and Volunteering. However, work is in progress to streamline the process across the Council, with the development of a Corporate Volunteering Strategy.
- Audit Wales Report 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' Recommendations – an action plan had been developed and Swansea was deemed to be doing well. Tackling Poverty was included in the Performance Framework and work was ongoing with the Welsh Government for multi year funding. The majority of recommendations were being achieved.
- Skills Development - the focus on improving the way we help people to develop their skills, qualifications and employment prospects so that they can find well-paid, meaningful jobs and improve prospects for their future. Equipping school children with the correct skills for the work place – was ranked as the highest priority and multiple projects are underway across Swansea with dedicated officers. However, it was noted that Swansea does well in getting people into work.
- 2023/24 Targets – Concern around Red RAG Status regarding Homelessness – despite collaborative working with Housing colleagues, homelessness presentations had increased and this remained a challenge.
- Refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy – noted on course to be published by March 2024 subject to public consultation. The Committee was keen for opportunity to comment on the draft Strategy.

In response to a question regarding the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, comments in relation to Child Poverty in which he has said that it's a disappointment more has not been done to tackle child poverty since devolution, the Cabinet Member for Well-being stated that tackling Child Poverty was a political choice and, in her opinion,

some issues were not as important as Child Poverty. She felt that a dedicated Minister with responsibility for Child Poverty would be a positive change for the future.

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.

53 Scrutiny of Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities - Support for Business (Councillor Robert Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism).

The Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism provided a report highlighting the work of 'Business Swansea', launched in April 2021, which was a dedicated support service with the objective of improving the quality and uptake of business support in Swansea. This work was delivered by the Council's Economic Regeneration Team.

The Cabinet Member, assisted by relevant officers, took the Committee through the report highlighting certain aspects, including key areas of work (communication, events, grant support, partner engagement), Management and Resources, improvements/impact and future programme.

Committee questioning and discussions focussed on the following:

- Business Grants – the impact and success of business grants was discussed, and impact, for example, on Swansea Market. Noted there is currently a high level of occupancy (94%) within Swansea Market, with a number of businesses that have accessed advice and support from 'Business Swansea'. Details of current initiatives were highlighted (the market garden project) and Swansea Market's success in winning Britain's Best Indoor Market.
- Business Swansea – discussion around the impact this new service has made. Noted that the new support service has been successful in creating a simplified single point of contact for businesses and communication and engagement had improved. Whilst work is ongoing the impact is tangible.
- Parc Felindre – whilst not directly related to the work of 'Business Swansea', officers informed the Committee that work was ongoing in proactively marketing the site. Daily and monthly meetings take place to monitor enquiries. Officers confirmed that there were no impediments to any prospective developer (e.g. around services on site) and the site was being marketed intensively.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism and Officers for their input.

Resolved that the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration, Events & Tourism reflecting discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

54 Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report: Adult Services (Councillor Sue Jones, Convener).

Councillor Sue Jones provided the Committee with a progress report on the work / activities of the Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report: Adult Services.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report: Adult Services be noted.

55 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

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

56 Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Chair presented the regular report on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24 which the Committee is responsible for monitoring.

The main items for the next Committee on 16 January comprised:

- Scrutiny of Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities: Q & A with Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy.
- Follow Up - Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group

The Chair referred to the final session of the Scrutiny Training & Development Programme:

- Self-Assessment of Scrutiny (two parts) – to be held on 17 January (online)/23 January (Lord Mayor's Reception Room, Guildhall)

57 Scrutiny Letters.

The Chair referred to the following letters, reflecting on recent Committee Scrutiny activity:

- Committee – Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board - Letter to Chair of Swansea Public Services Board (Cabinet Member for Service Transformation)
- Committee – Scrutiny of Children & Young People's Rights Scheme Progress Report 2021-23 - Letter to Cabinet Member for Community (Support)
- Committee – Scrutiny of Annual Report – Corporate Safeguarding 2022/23 - Letter to Cabinet Member for Care Services
- Committee – Follow Up of Bus Services Scrutiny Working Group - Letter to Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure

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

The Chair referred upcoming Panel/Working Group/Regional Scrutiny meetings, for awareness.

Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee (19.12.2023)
Cont'd

The meeting ended at 5.20 pm

Chair