



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 15 October 2024 at 5.00 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)

Elizabeth Lee

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley
M H Jones

S M Jones
L R Jones

Officer(s)

Chris Dale
Jeremy Davies
Caroline Gregg
Samantha Jenkins
Adrian Jeremiah
Brij Madahar
Phil Marshall
Paul Meller
Mike Scott

Countryside Principal Officer
Group Leader Parks and Cleansing
Countryside Access Officer
Democratic Services Officer
Lead Lawyer
Scrutiny Team Leader
Countryside Access Officer
Natural Environment Manager
Countryside Team Leader

Also present

Councillor C Anderson – Cabinet Member for Community (Services)

Councillor A Stevens – Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Davis, E W Fitzgerald and V A Holland

Statutory Co-opted Member(s): Beth Allender

27 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interest was declared:

Councillor A Stevens – Personal – Minute 31 - Follow Up: Scrutiny Working Group – Public Rights of Way.

28 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.

29 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 17 September 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

30 Public Question Time.

There were no public questions.

31 Follow Up: Scrutiny Working Group - Public Rights of Way.

The Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure assisted by the Natural Environment Manager, Countryside Team Leader, Countryside Principal Officer and Countryside Access Officers reported on progress in the context of the previous Scrutiny on Public Rights of Way (which took place in November 2023), on actions, delivery of work and achievements / performance.

Committee questioning and discussion focussed on the following:

- Public Rights of Way (PROW) footfall / usage and whether this has increased – Councillors asked about the Council's ability to record / monitor usage. Officers advised that there were no plans to record / monitor usage. Previous attempts had been inconclusive, labour intensive and usage figures had remained the same year on year. Therefore, the preferred option was to liaise with Tourism colleagues to include PROW usage in their visitor surveys, though it was acknowledged that this would be an underestimate of the number of people using the path network, given use by local residents.
- Progress in developing the 10-year Countryside Action Plan – Councillors heard that public consultation had taken place towards the end of last year. The initial consultation period had been extended at the request of Natural Resources Wales and would continue until April 2025. Following the conclusion of the consultation period, Natural Resources Wales confirmed that no further detailed assessment was required. There were a number of issues requiring resolution prior to re-consultation early next year.
- Developments regarding resources / team restructuring – there were discussion regarding both staffing and financial resources. In regard to staffing, the same numbers existed however merging the PROW and Countryside teams had led to a more collaborative way of working. In terms of finance, the grants were fairly constant each year. However, costs on materials were increasing resulting in a net budget reduction. Officers detailed the different ways of working and alternative streams of funding. Councillors asked about the potential for external sources of support, such as volunteers. Noted that the Service works with volunteer organisations / the probation service which are both helpful in limited ways as organising suitable work for volunteers can be labour intensive and complex. A package of solutions was being developed which included 'Adopt a Path' project and working with rambler associations.

- Marketing activity regarding PROW promotion of PROW – noted that leaflets are produced and distributed. There is close working with the Tourism Section to ensure that countryside access opportunities are raised through promotional campaigns, and through social media.
- Collaborative working with the National Trust – Officers confirmed that collaborative work is regularly undertaken to ensure that routes on National Trust land are open.
- Progress in lobbying WLGA / Welsh Government on PROW legislation – recent meetings and current progress were detailed regarding proposed legislative amendments to the various Acts dating back to 1949. Committee Members were curious about the time this is taking. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Infrastructure confirmed he would progress with the WLGA/Welsh Government when the opportunity arose.
- Joint / collaborative working between those involved in PROW work and Active Travel work – Officers confirmed that relationships were being developed. Noted that using funding intended for Active Travel for PROW was not an option as the Welsh Government had defined parameters for the use of that specific money. Councillors were told that the Countryside Access Team is routinely consulted by the Active Travel Team on all the Active Travel schemes that could potentially be carried out to identify any issues, opportunities for joined up working on projects, appropriate apparatus to be installed, as well as any ecological constraints.
- Remedies for dealing with landowners and PROW there was a discussion about access issues and how these can be reported. Noted that the Countryside Access team has its own PROW web pages including a range of information including maps, and where issues can be reported.. PROW users are asked to send a photo which makes it easier to resolve issues (fallen trees etc).
- Partnership Working – noted close working with groups including landowners, The Ramblers, Gower Society, National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Voluntary Groups, and Community Councils, in order to maintain, facilitate and promote countryside access. The key forum for partnership working is through the Swansea Local Access Forum.
- Electric Scooters / bikes – Councillors asked whether there have been incidents of anti-social behaviour on PROW involving electric scooters or bikes/ Noted that there had been no reported issues.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure and Officers for their input.

Resolved that:

- 1) the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

32 Scrutiny of Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities: Streetscene Improvements: Cleansing Operations - Councillor Cyril Anderson, Cabinet Member for Community (Services).

The Cabinet Member for Community Services, assisted by the Group Leader - Parks & Cleansing, discussed the responsibilities to remove litter, detritus and fly tipping

from public areas that are dealt with by the Council's Cleansing Service; Cleansing operations relating to the Street Scene; Improvement Initiatives; Performance; and Future Challenges & Opportunities. Also included was a report on the Cleansing Ward Operative Team providing examples of 'before' and 'after' photos along with a selection of comments/messages of thanks received.

Committee questioning and discussion focussed on the following:

- Resources – current staffing levels and vacancies within the Cleansing Services were outlined. Noted that agency workers were used to cover positions waiting to be filled and occasional weekend work. The use and types of mechanical vehicles was detailed.
- Litter – The Committee asked about the volume of litter collected from the City Centre. Officers stated that it would be challenging to provide figures in relation to litter within the City Centre as operatives collect from various other locations prior to drop off. However, Officers would examine whether any figures could be provided. In relation to recycling, good partnership working existed between the Cleansing and Waste Services. Officers were confident that waste separation was successful within the resources available.
- Replacement of Multi-service Litter bins – Officers confirmed that life expired bins had been replaced. However, recycling separation bins existed in areas of high footfall. Where possible, recyclable items were separated but unfortunately due to contamination that was not possible in all situations. Officers detailed the challenges associated with recycling separation bins and dog waste bins.
- CWOT – it was reported that Councillors were making good use of the CWOT and a log of all requests maintained so that any given moment updates could be given on progress / status if required.
- Fly Tipping – Councillors were told that the Service records / monitors performance against fly tipping removal and aims to remove litter within 5 working days, however, fly tipping is generally removed within 1 working day.
- Increase in the incidents of Fly Tipping – a written response would be provided to the Committee in relation to fly tipping incidents and enforcement action. The Service is actively involved in networking across the Country.
- Commercial Activity – Officers confirmed that the Service does not have contracts with private businesses for providing cleansing services. However, the Service does generate ad hoc revenue for the Council where resources allowed (eg graffiti removal).
- CWOT – Leaf Removal – Councillors asked about the potential for and benefits of temporary road closures to improve the quality of cleansing such as leaf / debris removal that impacts on drainage, etc. as well as collaborative working across the Council, particularly with highways staff. It was confirmed that joint working

existed between departments and collaborative working could be further developed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Community Services and the Officer for their input.

Resolved that:

- 1) the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Community Services reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

33 Scrutiny Performance Panel Progress Report: Education (Councillor Lyndon Jones, Convener)

Councillor Lyndon Jones provided the Committee with a progress report on the work / activities of the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel.

Resolved that the Progress Report on the Education Scrutiny Panel be noted.

34 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

The Chair introduced the report and sought approval in respect of the membership of Working Groups on Public Engagement and Agile Working as shown in the report. This included appointing a Convener for each. Councillors Lyndon Jones and Stuart Rice had volunteered respectively.

There was also an addition to the existing Climate Change & Nature Performance Panel, Councillor Jess Pritchard is joining that Panel

Resolved that:

- 1) the report be approved, with Councillor Lyndon Jones appointed as Convener of the Public Engagement Scrutiny Working Group and Councillor Stuart Rice appointed as Convener of the Agile Working Scrutiny Working Group

35 Scrutiny Work Programme.

The Chair introduced the agreed Work Programme to facilitate the Committee's monitoring of all Scrutiny activity. Various information was provided to ensure progress could be reviewed with the agreed Programme.

He referred to the headlines in the covering report, and in the appendices, members noted:

- the Committee's own work plan
- the Cabinet Forward Plan was also included for review for anything significant within, should the Committee feel Pre-decision Scrutiny was merited for any particular report, not already identified
- timetable of all Scrutiny activities (projected or actual where dates are known).

The Chair highlighted the main items for the next Committee meeting scheduled for 19 November, 2024 were:

- Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board (follows last session in May 2024)
- Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report (annual item)
- Community Assets Inquiry Final Report (to approve its submission to Cabinet)

36 Scrutiny Letters.

The Chair stated that there were no specific letter(s) from previous Scrutiny meetings to report on, on this occasion.

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

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

The meeting ended at 6.19 pm

Chair