

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

U C Clay
E W Fitzgerald
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

A C S Colburn
F M Gordon
P M Meara

Councillor(s)

S E Crouch
T J Hennegan

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley

Co-opted Member(s)

P R Hood-Williams

Officer(s)

Allison Lowe
Brij Madahar
Wendy Parkin

Democratic Services Officer
Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Senior Lawyer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): N J Davies, C R Evans, E J King, D J Lewis and G J Tanner

56 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL & PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.**

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

57 **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.

58 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 8 August 2016 be approved as a correct record.

59 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME.**

The Committee heard from Mr Rowe in relation to the proposed scrutiny of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The Committee noted his concerns about the management and control of HMOs and current / future impact on communities in the east side of Swansea, such as St. Thomas, which are seeing a rise in the number of HMOs as a result of the new University campus.

He asked why landlords are not required to pay Council Tax on properties classed as HMOs. He also expressed concerns relating to Planning issues.

The Chair confirmed that should the Committee agree to establish a Scrutiny Working Group on HMOs, as proposed, it would explore such issues. The Chair stated that she would write to Mr Rowe to acknowledge his concerns and how he can engage with the scrutiny of this topic. Mr Rowe was also encouraged to send in any further questions / views on this matter, which would be passed on to the Working Group.

60 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR ANTI-POVERTY AND COMMUNITIES (COUNCILLOR WILL EVANS).**

Councillor W Evans provided a short opening address on his Cabinet Portfolio prior to taking questions from the Committee which focussed on the following:

- The Tackling Poverty budget and outcomes, reporting procedures and statistics required by the Welsh Government (WG) and whether comparison tables were available – it was noted that various Performance Indicators for Tackling Poverty were included in the Corporate Plan, and reported to WG on a quarterly or 6 monthly basis;
- Tackling Poverty Strategy – the Cabinet Member acknowledged the Scrutiny Inquiry looking at this. With the findings of this inquiry being considered he stated that the aim was to produce a revised strategy early in 2017, taking into account other relevant pieces of work as well – such as the Integrated Impact Assessment which has been carried out. The Cabinet Member was asked to confirm the status of an apparent revised strategy and share with the Scrutiny Panel to help inform the Inquiry;
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) had released a paper on solving poverty in the UK. It seeks to address key questions about why poverty continues and how it can be addressed - this was being looked at by the Cabinet Advisory Committee to also help inform improvements to local strategy;
- The new Communities for Work Programme would focus on tackling poverty through sustainable employment and help to provide mentoring and support for employment in order to get people back into work to assist with economic growth and prosperity;
- The importance of education, economic prosperity and employment in tackling poverty – the committee expressed concern about reported job losses and difficulty in attracting jobs to the area;
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) was on the increase in Wales;
- The LIFT programme had been piloted in Penderry via the European Social Fund programme and many people had successfully been lifted out of poverty as a result;
- The definition of poverty and the criteria that defines what poverty is – the Cabinet Member felt it boiled down to an inability to meet basic needs;
- The use of the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) - the benchmark of minimum needs based on what goods and services members of the public think are required for an adequate standard of living;

- The number of Allotments and plans in light of operational review;
- Addressing issues around community cohesion – a suggestion that the Cabinet Member should consider reporting regularly on this (including incidents / statistics) to Council or Scrutiny for awareness and assessment of work to support cohesion;
- Impact of NEETS budget underspend;
- Concern raised about information indicating there are a number of people living in tents in certain secluded areas of Swansea – the Cabinet Member welcomed more information on this in order to investigate further;
- Digital inclusion - the need for alternative provision to be provided for people who are living in poverty or do not have access to computer technology. This will be the subject of a future Scrutiny Working Group.

The Chair thanked Cllr Evans for attending.

RESOLVED that the Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Cabinet Member, reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

61 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT: CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (COUNCILLOR MARY JONES, CONVENER).**

Councillor Mary Jones, Convener presented the final report arising from the Scrutiny Panel's inquiry into Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

The report presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the inquiry that sought to answer the following question:

How can the Council work with health and other partners to reduce demand for specialist child & adolescent mental health services?

Members praised the work of the Panel and support it received. The committee discussed a number of the issues raised in the report and the importance of these services.

It was remarked how would scrutiny be able to effectively monitor change, improvement and impact from the recommendations, based on current performance levels, following cabinet action(s). The convener stated that she would stress to Cabinet the need for a clear and measurable action plan to help assess impact and difference made.

A suggestion was made to look at whether the recommendations could be more effectively grouped e.g. to separate out those that focussed on the work of the authority, and those that placed emphasis on talking to health / encouraging actions which others may be responsible for.

RESOLVED that the report be submitted to Cabinet for decision, subject to any changes made by the convener in response to the comments of the committee above.

62 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION (COUNCILLOR TERRY HENNEGAN, CONVENER).**

Councillor Terry Hennegan presented the final report for the scrutiny inquiry into Building Sustainable Communities through Community Action.

The report presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the inquiry that sought to answer the following question:

How can the Council best support residents to run services in their own communities?

He thanked the Panel for tackling this subject and work carried out. He praised the support received by the Panel in undertaking this inquiry, and particularly in the drafting of the final report. He highlighted some of the main findings, not least the training, support and advice that is vital for successful community engagement and asset transfer. The financial assistance available to interested community groups was also discussed.

RESOLVED that the report be submitted to Cabinet for decision.

63 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORT - SCHOOLS (COUNCILLOR FIONA GORDON, CONVENER).**

Councillor Fiona Gordon, Convener of the Schools Performance Panel provided an update on the Panel's activities, correspondence between the Panel and Cabinet Members, proposals made and impact.

She highlighted the Panel's approach to looking at issues around school improvement, including continued engagement with schools. She reflected on the recent session with Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive School looking at good practice and how that is shared with others. She explained the rationale behind engaging with particular schools, and the Panel's positive relationship with challenge advisors.

The committee asked whether the Panel has discussed the role of schools and wider community use. Councillor Gordon stated that the Panel could include this aspect in future sessions, particularly as it also is part of actions to tackle poverty in communities.

Cllr Gordon also noted a suggestion for the Panel to look at the engagement between schools, universities and museums, for example over events such as the British Science Festival.

It was noted that the Panel's meeting with Birchgrove Comprehensive School would be re-scheduled from 19 October 2016 to a date later in the year.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

64 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17.**

The Chair presented the work programme and referred to the Public Request for Scrutiny in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) for consideration.

The Chair also reported that Scrutiny Dispatches would be reported to Council on 22 September 2016 due to August Council being cancelled.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator explained that a further report on the Castle Garden Development and Public Realm Opportunities was expected to be presented to Cabinet on 20 October 2016. Therefore advance notice was being provided to Councillors for a Pre-Decision Scrutiny meeting sometime during the week commencing 17 October 2016.

RESOLVED that:

- a) The Scrutiny Work Programme as outlined in the report be noted;
- b) The Committee endorse the proposal for a Scrutiny Working Group to be established in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

65 **MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS.**

The Chair presented a report outlining proposed revisions to the Scrutiny Panel / Working Group membership.

A revision to the current scrutiny panel/s working group membership was outlined in respect of:

- Tackling Poverty Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – Councillor D W Cole to be added.

RESOLVED that the above appointment be endorsed.

66 **SCRUTINY LETTERS.**

The Chair reported the Scrutiny Letters Log and referred to the recent correspondence between Scrutiny and Cabinet Members.

The Chair stated that a response from Councillor J Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education had now been received and therefore would be included in the agenda pack for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee scheduled for 10 October 2016.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Letters Log be **NOTED**.

67 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

There had been no recent Scrutiny events.

68 **UPCOMING SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

The Chair referred to a repeat of the Tackling Poverty awareness session for scrutiny councillors planned for 15 September 2016 at 4.00 pm.

An Education Through Regional Working (ERW) Regional Councillor Group was scheduled for 27 September 2016 at 10.30 am in Pembrokeshire.

69 **AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PLAN (FOR INFORMATION).**

The Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee reported that the Chair of the Audit Committee had been invited to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee to ensure mutual awareness and understanding of respective work plans and co-ordination and enable issues relating to respective work programmes to be discussed.

RESOLVED that the Audit Committee Work Plan be **NOTED**.

70 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2016/17 MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 4.30 PM).**

The dates and times of future Committee meetings for the 2016-2017 Municipal Year were **NOTED**.

71 **DATE AND TIME OF UPCOMING PANEL / WORKING GROUP MEETINGS.**

The date and time of upcoming Panel / Work Group meetings were provided for information.

The meeting ended at 6.15 pm

CHAIR