

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 5, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON MONDAY,
10 APRIL 2017 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
T J Hennegan
J W Jones

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
C A Holley

Councillor(s)

F M Gordon
P R Hood-Williams

Also Present

Councillor Hazel Morris Convener of School Readiness Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

Officer(s)

Kate Jones Democratic Services Officer
Brij Madahar Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Sandie Richards Principal Lawyer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): U C Clay, S E Crouch, N J Davies, E J King and G J Tanner

Co-opted Member(s): D Anderson-Thomas

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

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

171 **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.

172 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 13 March 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

173 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME.**

There were no public questions.

174 **FINAL SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT: SCHOOL READINESS.**

Councillor Hazel Morris, Convener, presented the final report regarding the work that had been undertaken in relation to the School Readiness Scrutiny Inquiry. The

Inquiry focussed on 'How can school readiness be improved in Swansea?'. The following key points were highlighted: -

- There was little consensus as to what constituted being 'ready for school';
- There are excellent initiatives in defined target areas such as flying start which were making a big impact into school readiness;
- There are children and families that need services, such as flying start, but are outside of the defined target areas;
- Research highlighted that investment into early years would result in the need to spend less in later life services;
- The need for continuing support and expansion of early years initiatives;
- A key issue highlighted was whether schools were 'child ready' and greater challenges were needed to be set for schools to be 'child ready schools';
- The importance of keeping Early Years high on the agenda.

A question was raised about the ability to use Pupil Deprivation Grants across clusters.

The Chair thanked the Convener, Panel Members and Scrutiny Officer for their work.

RESOLVED that the report proceeds to Cabinet for decision.

175 **SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE PANEL PROGRESS REPORTS.**

The Chair provided a progress report on the Public Services Board Performance Panel. She highlighted the following: -

- Since the last update to committee in November there have been four panel meetings
- There has been discussion on Public Services Board priorities
- The Panel had provided their comments on the draft Wellbeing Assessment as a statutory Consultee. There were a number of comments which the Panel wished to be considered as part of the consultation.
- A number of Q & A sessions had been held with Public Services Board Core Group members, including the Council, ABMU Health Board, Natural Resources Wales, South Wales Police, and Swansea Council for Voluntary Service.
- The Panel's final meeting, this Municipal Year, was scheduled for 12 April 2017 for a Q & A Session with representatives of the Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service.
- The Panel was writing to the Chair of the Public Services Board with views, issues and recommendations following the Q & A sessions with the Public Service Board Core Group Members.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

176 **SCRUTINY LETTERS.**

The Chair reported the Scrutiny Letters Log. She highlighted the following: -

- The time taken for a response to some letters.
- The findings of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Scrutiny Working Group
- The letter written by the Digital Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group highlighted a key issue in respect of the language used in digital inclusion. She agreed with the Working Group that - 'the Council should ensure that people are able to communicate through non-digital channels where needed and should not be 'educating' or telling people what they must do but rather working with people and offering choices'.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Letters Log be noted.

177 **ANNUAL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW 2016/17.**

The Chair presented the Annual Work Programme Review 2016/17. She also noted that she had attended Audit Committee to present the 2015/2016 Scrutiny Annual Report. She reported that the Audit Committee commended the Annual Report and work carried out.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator highlighted that the report contained a summary of the work completed throughout the year as well as some performance data and the results of the Annual Councillor Scrutiny Survey. As it was the last scrutiny meeting of the municipal year, he noted that this was an ideal time to reflect on the scrutiny experience in consideration of the following questions: -

- What has worked particularly well?
- What has not worked so well?
- Whether the scrutiny work programme focused on the right things?
- What would help scrutiny to be better?

A discussion ensued surrounding the posed questions which focused on the following: -

- The scrutiny of Commissioning Reviews had been a positive step forward, but this would be further improved by having more time to scrutinise such important cabinet reports
- The Scrutiny Team were to be commended for their work, advice and support.
- The need to ensure that future scrutiny work focuses on strategic topics to have maximum impact, and spend less time on very specific and smaller, nonetheless interesting, topics.
- The relationship with cabinet and cabinet members in relation to inquiry reports and response to recommendations. There was some concern whether reports and recommendations, in which much time has been invested, were fully understood and given due consideration.
- The need for more councillors to be involved in scrutiny.

The Chair thanked the Scrutiny Team for their excellent work as well as all Councillors who had been involved in Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the report and comments be noted.

Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee (10.04.2017)
Cont'd

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm

CHAIR