

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 14 AUGUST 2017 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: T J Hennegan (Vice Chair)

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
L S Gibbard
P Jones
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)

J P Curtice
D W Helliwell
E J King

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
C A Holley
I E Mann

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

P M Black

Co-opted Member(s)

P R Hood-Williams

Officer(s)

Allison Lowe
Brij Madahar
Debbie Smith

Democratic Services Officer
Scrutiny Team Leader
Interim Deputy Head of Legal, Democratic Services and
Business Intelligence.
Senior Lawyer

Lyndsay Thomas

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S E Crouch, C R Evans, M H Jones, M Sykes and G J Tanner

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

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

18 **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.

19 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 10 July 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

20 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME.**

A number of questions were asked by Mr John Williams, on behalf of residents of Uplands and Brynmill relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing enforcement.

Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Housing, Energy & Building Services thanked Mr Williams for his questions and stated that she would provide a full written response to all of the questions asked.

However the Cabinet Member mentioned that it was always preferable to deal with issues with HMO, and engage with landlords and tenants, on an informal basis first, with prosecution being a matter of last resort. She referred to the 'Declaration of Understanding' from licence holders / occupiers in relation to compliance with fire precautions, waste management, anti-social behaviour and management regulations.

Mr Williams stressed that residents expect to see the Council taking action as early as possible. The Cabinet Member welcomed the comments and accepted that there was room for improvement and intended to work closely with local members, particularly in the HMO management area, to deal with issues. She added that since taking on responsibility for HMOs in May her focus had been on the development of Supplementary Planning Guidance which would help manage / control HMOs numbers.

21 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, ENERGY & BUILDING SERVICES (COUNCILLOR ANDREA LEWIS).**

Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Housing, Energy & Building Services provided a verbal address further to the written report circulated on her portfolio responsibilities and achievements.

Questions and discussions with the Cabinet Member focussed on the following:

- **HMO Management**
 - The Cabinet Member highlighted details of a recent successful prosecution, whereby a landlord had been prosecuted for 25 offences relating to failing to comply with regulations, in particular fire safety precautions, which posed a severe risk. The landlord had received a fine of £18,600 with full costs of approximately £1692 being awarded to the Council.
 - the timetable for the Supplementary Planning Guidance coming back to the Planning Committee.
- **Rent Smart Wales** – Members queried the impact that this service has had on the department, and what additional staff were taken on to deal with it and when was the last time staffing was reviewed.
- **Homelessness Strategy** – an update was provided on the development of the strategy. Public consultation responses had now been received and would be reported back to the Poverty Reduction Policy Development & Delivery Committee for discussion prior to further consultation with other relevant stakeholders. Council approval was expected in Autumn 2018. The committee requested pre-decision scrutiny on the strategy or earlier engagement to ensure opportunity to influence the draft strategy in good time.
- **Council Housing / Building Fire Safety**
 - the distinction between UK fire regulations and European fire regulations was discussed.

- the Cabinet Member updated members on the recent positive results of fire safety testing on cladding used in our high-rise buildings, passing UK Government tests. She stated that the whole fire safety system in place was deemed safe, and exceeded minimum standards.
- members praised the local response in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire to provide assurance to residents.
- sprinkler systems – the Cabinet Member confirmed that Welsh Government had insisted that all new buildings be installed with sprinkler systems. Sprinkler installation would also begin at the Council's high-rise blocks of flats in November. Priority would be given to blocks of flats which have had exterior cladding fitted, with work continuing on a phased basis over the following months to install in all high-rise blocks. Councillors asked about ensuring tenant awareness of the operation of a sprinkler system, and the position with insurance should there be any malfunction. The cabinet member was asked to look into engaging all councillors about the system for their awareness and members welcomed any possibility of a demonstration of the system.
- Fire blankets – the cabinet member confirmed that these would not be issued to tenants due to advice from the Fire Service, and other issues. The advice to residents is to turn off the relevant source, e.g. hob and evacuate the property, and not to tackle the fire themselves which could put people at more risk.
- **Neighbourhood Support Units / Anti-Social Behaviour** – the committee asked about effectiveness in dealing with anti-social behaviour and challenges.
- **District Heating Scheme** – the committee asked about progress and were told that options were still being considered about the best way to introduce this. The cabinet member added that one of the City Deal projects concerns 'homes as power stations' to enable buildings to generate, store and release energy.
- **More Homes Council House Building Project** – the committee was told that the development at Milford Way, Penplas was progressing well. The Cabinet Member was extremely proud of the project and she praised the work carried out by Corporate Building Services. Properties would be allocated at the end of October to those at the top of the Housing list and most in need. The committee asked about costs and were told that a report would be coming forward in September.
- **Electric vehicle charging infrastructure** – it was felt this required an 'all Wales' approach to improve consumer confidence in making the switch to electric vehicles. Additional electric vehicles were in the process of being purchased as part of our fleet – taking it up to 40 vehicles. A list of public charging points in the area was requested.
- **Green Energy Schemes** – all options including Biomass technology collaboration with other nearby Authorities such as Neath Port Talbot / Bridgend Councils were being considered.
- **Tidal Bay Lagoon** – This decision was still with the UK Government.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for attending and providing a comprehensive update.

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

22 **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS.**

The Chair provided guidance on pre-decision scrutiny ahead of Cabinet reports on:

- a) All Council Catering Commissioning Review (agenda item 8);
- b) Planning & City Regeneration Commissioning Review (agenda item 9).

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The pre-decision scrutiny process and role of the Committee is noted;
- 2) The Committee considers the Cabinet reports and proposals (agenda items 8 & 9);
- 3) The Committee agree any views on the proposed decision that are to be raised with Cabinet.

23 **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: ALL COUNCIL CATERING COMMISSIONING REVIEW. (REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR SERVICE TRANSFORMATION & BUSINESS OPERATIONS)**

Councillor Clive Lloyd, Cabinet Member for Service Transformation & Business Operations and Andrew Hopkins, Business Improvement Advisor were present for the committee's consideration of the cabinet report on 'All Council Catering Commissioning Review'.

The Cabinet Member explained how this review was an evolving process as part of 'Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future', and the first of a series that will represent a cross cutting council wide review. The review had identified that there was duplication of certain functions across the Council in Social Services, Education, and our 'In House' catering service. Although some services had been excluded from the review, it had become clear that the current service could not be maintained.

The Council wide approach to improving catering services would be taken forward by a 3 year business plan, included in the cabinet report.

The preferred option, as outlined in the report, was to consolidate the existing school meals and social services catering functions into a single in-house managed service which will also manage existing staff catering functions at the Civic Centre, Guildhall & Pipehouse Wharf.

The Committee considered the proposed recommendations in the report and raised any issues and concerns that should be brought to the attention of Cabinet ahead of its decision on 17 March 2017.

There was some concern about the limited amount to time available to consider the report, but the Committee indicated no objection to the recommendations. However, members had a number of observations which they asked to be considered by Cabinet, in relation to:

- The need for further scrutiny of implementation of the business plan
- The relationship with schools and issues
- The need to demonstrate that the integrated in-house service is competitive
- The internal controls necessary to support the business model
- Implications of the planned sale of the Civic Centre on plans
- The achievability of projected savings
- The need for more evidence in the report to support the rejection of outsourcing as the best way forward
- The desire for an emphasis with future plan on local food sourcing and improving nutrition

The Cabinet Member stated that he would be happy for further reports to come to scrutiny as requested in the future.

RESOLVED that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Cabinet Member on the views of the Committee, for Cabinet's consideration.

24 **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: PLANNING & CITY REGENERATION COMMISSIONING REVIEW. (JOINT REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, TOURISM & MAJOR PROJECTS AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES & INNOVATION)**

Councillor Robert Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Major Projects and Phil Holmes, Head of Planning and City Regeneration, were present for the committee's consideration of the cabinet report on 'Options Appraisal for the Future Delivery of Services in the Scope of the Planning and City Regeneration Commissioning Review'.

The Head of Planning and City Regeneration supplemented the report with a presentation, which provided a background to the commissioning review, and took the committee through the key findings and supporting evidence in relation to performance, finance, benchmarking and service delivery options appraisal. The report recommended that future services would be best delivered through a transformed in-house model.

The committee considered the key issues, conclusions, and proposed recommendations contained within the report and raised any issues and concerns that should be brought to the attention of Cabinet ahead of its decision on 17 March 2017.

Although the Committee had concerns about the limited time to scrutinise the report, the Committee was able to support the proposed decision. They found the report to be well evidenced and it provided a clear case for in-house transformation. The Committee also recognised the specialist nature of the work carried out within the service, which supports the development of an in-house model.

They were particularly pleased to see that Swansea Market comes out very well in the review. Members felt that it was a great asset for the city centre and important to stay under the Council's control.

Whilst the Committee was supportive a number of relevant matters were highlighted for cabinet's attention, below:

- The need for further scrutiny to monitor progress given the significant amount of work necessary to achieve the desired transformation
- Concerns about the intention to split up the existing Sustainable Development Team, and weakening support for this important work
- Advantages from creating a core Land Charges Team

RESOLVED that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee writes to the Cabinet Member on the views of the Committee, for Cabinet's consideration.

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

Having invited expressions of interest from all non-executive councillors the Chair provided a proposed membership list for the Inquiry, Performance Panels and Working Groups.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The membership be agreed;
- 2) The Conveners of the Schools Performance Panel and Development & Regeneration Performance Panel be co-opted onto the Committee, if not already members of the Committee.

26 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2017/18.**

The Chair updated the committee on the Scrutiny Work Programme 2017/2018.

The report provided the Committee with:

- The Scrutiny Work Programme;
- A plan for future Committee meetings;
- A progress report and plan for the Panels and Working Groups.
- Performance Panel Terms of Reference

RESOLVED that the terms of reference for the Development & Regeneration Performance Panel be approved.

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

The Audit Committee Work Plan for 2017/2018 was noted.

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

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

The meeting ended at 6.53 pm

CHAIR