



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

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

Teams

Tuesday, 14 May 2024 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor P M Black (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
F D O'Brien

Councillor(s)
M Jones
S Pritchard

Councillor(s)
W G Lewis

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

Beth Allender

Elizabeth Lee

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley

S M Jones

L R Jones

Officer(s)

Leanne Ahern
Samantha Jenkins
Brij Madahar
Tracey McNulty
Rhian Millar
Jane Richmond
Richard Rowlands
Debbie Smith
Ness Young

PSB Support Officer
Democratic Services Officer
Scrutiny Team Leader
Head of Cultural Services
Consultation Co-ordinator
Project Manager Strategic Climate Change
Strategic Delivery & Performance Manager
Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Director of Corporate Services

Also present

Councillor E King – Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities

Councillor R V Smith – Cabinet Member for Education & Learning

Councillor A S Lewis – Cabinet Member for Service Transformation (Leader's Representative on PSB/Chair of PSB)

Roger Thomas, Chief Fire Officer, Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service (Vice-Chair of PSB)

Paula O'Connor – Chair of Governance & Audit Committee

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Davis, V A Holland and T M White

Statutory Co-opted Member(s):

Councillor Co-opted Members: P R Hood-Williams

106 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

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

Councillor L R Jones and Councillor S Pritchard – Personal – Minute 110 - Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board.

107 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.

108 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 16 April 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

109 Public Question Time.

None.

110 Scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of Swansea PSB, accompanied by PSB lead officers, were present for Scrutiny of the Swansea Public Services Board (PSB).

Provided to the Committee in support of the session, for questions, were:

- The PSB Annual Report for 2023-2024.
- The Wellbeing Plan Action Plan for 2024-2025.
- A copy of previous correspondence between the SPC and Chair of PSB regarding the meeting in Oct 2023 – for follow up, as necessary.
- Minutes of Swansea Public Services Board: 12 Oct & 8 Feb meetings – for Committee awareness.

Committee questioning and discussion regarding the performance of the PSB focussed on the following:

- Annual Report – progress towards the Local Wellbeing Objectives were detailed in relation to: Early Years; Live Well, Age Well; Climate Change & Nature Recovery; Strong Communities, including steps to deliver these.. The next steps for the PSB involved actions to support the transformation of Early Year Services, build on Swansea's 2022 declaration of being a Human Rights City, work towards Swansea's Net Zero target and nature recovery, make Swansea safer, more cohesive and prosperous, develop Swansea's integrated Cultural Offer, influence and connect with other governance arrangements, improve data quality and accessibility and develop Swansea PSB performance management arrangements.

- Action Plan / Performance Management Arrangements – the PSB Action Plan had effective measures of performance across all of the 8 Objectives and was monitored every quarter. Details were published in the Annual Report which was a public facing document and had been published on the internet. A video version of the Annual Report was also under development, to engage the public, and will accompany the final version of the Annual Report. A multi agency event held on 3 June 2023 were detailed which had helped to raise the profile of the work of the PSB.
- Action Plan – Delivery of the Wellbeing Plan/Objectives – In terms of the most challenging PSB issues, Early Years and Climate Change & Nature Recovery remain the most complex. Managing the differing priorities and budgetary pressures within each of the partner organisations also remained a challenge. However, this was an area of continual progress and development.
- Comparison with Elsewhere – Whilst direct comparisons against the other 22 PSB's within Wales had not taken place, information regarding best practice and common themes were utilised. There was also reference to findings from a 2019 Audit Wales report which reviewed PSBs across Wales. Whilst a lack of funding was identified, partner organisations work together to set realistic and pragmatic targets. Raising awareness of the work of the PSB was also an area for development.
- Welsh Government Involvement – a Welsh Government representative attends all PSB meetings and a quarterly bulletin is produced and distributed. The Chair requested that the quarterly bulletin be distributed amongst City and County of Swansea Councillors to raise awareness of the PSB.

The Chair thanked all concerned for their input.

Resolved that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee write to the Chair of the Public Services Board, reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

111 Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2023-24.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities assisted by the Director of Corporate Services, presented the Welsh Language Scheme Annual Report 2022-2023. The report provided a summary of the activities relating to Welsh Standards within the financial year ending 31st March 2023; including new projects and activities during the year.

Members noted the key points, which encompassed:

- Welsh Language Calls.
- Translation Workload.
- Staff Self-Reporting Welsh Language Skills.
- New Posts with Welsh Language Skills Requirement.
- Formal Welsh Language Training Participation.

- Welsh Language Complaints.
- Welsh Medium Education.

The Council's efforts in 2023-2024 regarding Welsh language standards had shown both progress and areas for ongoing attention. The decrease in Welsh language calls aligned with the reduction in pandemic related services, while the Translation Unit's increased workload indicated a continued commitment to linguistic accessibility.

The rise in staff self-reporting Welsh language skills reflected growing linguistic diversity, supported by bilingual recruitment practices. However, a slight decrease in formal Welsh language training participation suggested a need for renewed efforts in staff development.

With fewer Welsh language complaints received and stable enrolment in Welsh medium education, the Council remained focussed on promoting Welsh language use and inclusivity. Ongoing efforts would ensure continued progress in meeting Welsh language standards and serving Welsh-speaking citizens effectively.

Committee questioning and discussions focussed on the following:

- Future Actions - The Annual Report identified an aim to revise promotion strategies with the development of a revised Welsh Language Promotion Strategy, integrating insights from the review of previous strategies and guidance from the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Guidance highlighted building blocks for the development of an effective strategy and detailed the areas to avoid. Analysis of data allowed the Council to develop its own agenda and target resources towards better proficiency.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities and the Director of Corporate Services for their input.

Resolved that the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning and the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

112 Review of the Council's Welsh Language Strategy 2017-22.

The Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities assisted by the Director of Corporate Services, presented the findings from a review of the Council's Welsh Language Strategy. The 2017-22 Strategy.

The Council's Welsh Language Standards had been instrumental in maintaining a focus on Welsh language promotion within Swansea and the Council itself. The analysis of key data points, including census statistics, education trends, staff language skills and job advertisement indicates both successes and areas for improvement. Whilst there had been a notable increase in Welsh-medium education enrolment and efforts to promote language skills amongst staff challenges such as

declining proficiency levels and potential mismatches in job requirements persisted. Moving forward, a more robust strategic and targeted approach to address these challenges, coupled with robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms would be essential to ensure the new Strategy's effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

It was noted that the 2022 Strategy had been rolled forward due to the Covid pandemic and progress was being made to develop a new Strategy for the period 2024-2029. A Co-production event was planned in both Welsh and English.

Committee questioning and discussions focussed on the following:

- Welsh Speaking Staff/Welsh Lessons - the Council was working to address this challenge and develop the number of Welsh speakers within the Council. A range of incentives are being developed such as career opportunities, pay, time off to attend Welsh classes which are held during working hours, remote working to enable staff to manage their workload in order to attend Welsh classes, informal sessions with Welsh speakers and developing a supported, encouraging environment.
- Trends in Welsh Medium Education – There was discussion on Welsh Government targets on the number of Welsh speakers, trends in Welsh-Medium Education and what bearing will this have on the Council's new Welsh Language Strategy

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities and the Director of Corporate Services for their input.

Resolved that the Chair write to the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning and the Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

113 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

No changes to report.

114 Scrutiny Letters.

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

- 1) Scrutiny Working Group – Customer Contact – 23 February 2024 – Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Service Transformation (Deputy Leader)
- 2) Committee – Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-2023 – 19 March, 2024 – Letter to / from Cabinet Members for Education & Learning and Culture, Human Rights & Equalities.

115 Committee End of Year Review 2023/24.

The Chair presented a report on the End of Year Review 2022/23 and invited Committee members to reflect on their experience and provide their views to the Scrutiny Team Leader.

The Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee addressed the Committee about the Audit / Scrutiny relationship and how effective that was in terms of ensuring good awareness of each other's work, avoiding duplication and gaps in work programmes, and the ability to refer issues between Committees.

The Chair informed the Committee that a Scrutiny Work Planning Conference, open to all non-executive Councillors, would be taking place on 18 June, with the first Committee meeting of the new municipal year then taking place in July.

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

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

The meeting ended at 5.06 pm

Chair