

Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24

Scrutiny Stories

Investigating Anti-Social Behaviour

In December 2023 findings from an inquiry into Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was presented to Cabinet following an in-depth piece of work by Scrutiny Councillors. The aim of the inquiry was to investigate how the Council is working with its partners to appropriately and effectively tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in Swansea.

The Inquiry Panel gathered detailed evidence on the resources and arrangements in place to deal with ASB, performance and challenges. The Panel met with several Cabinet Members and Council Officers, officers from South Wales Police, Registered Social Landlords/Housing Associations, representatives of Equality Groups and Forums, representatives from the Business Community, Swansea Council for Voluntary Service, as well as inviting public submissions. The Inquiry Panel were impressed with the commitment of all the organisations and individuals that took part in the inquiry. They were particularly pleased to meet with a group of young people who told Councillors what it was like from their perspective and how it affected them.

The Panel heard about the many challenges that face the Council and its partners in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour, how the issue is multi layered and required input and commitment across a wide selection of organisations not just our statutory partners. The Panel concluded its inquiry with a report to Cabinet that drew a number of conclusions and made 24 recommendations for Cabinet and the wider Safer Swansea Partnership that should help tackle and prevent ASB in Swansea.

Councillors recognised that effective strategies, policies and procedures in tackling ASB were in place and the Council was meeting its regulatory obligations. However, although the Council and partners were working together, they found that the overall picture of services and support was confusing. One of the key recommendations from the inquiry was to conduct a mapping exercise of Council Services and also of all those organisations that have a stake in improving ASB. Councillors felt that this would help the Council, its partners and wider stakeholders including the public to see the bigger picture, and help to address any cross departmental or organisation challenges.

They hoped that this inquiry highlighted the complexity and importance of the issues associated with Anti-Social Behaviour to a wider audience.

Of the 24 recommendations, 21 were accepted in full by Cabinet in April 2024, and 1 was partially agreed. The implementation of recommendations will be followed up by the Scrutiny Panel early in 2025 at which time the Panel will assess the impact of the inquiry.

[Inquiry Final Report \(Cabinet meeting 21 Dec 2023\)](#)

[Cabinet Response \(Cabinet meeting 18 Apr 2024\)](#)

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Looking in detail at Procurement Practice

Councillors looked at the progress being made and the impact of their Scrutiny Inquiry into Procurement. The aim of the inquiry had been to investigate how the Council is ensuring it procures locally, ethically, and greenly while being cost effective and transparent in its practices. Councillors met with various external organisations such as Swansea Council for Voluntary Service and Business Wales, contractors, and several Cabinet Members along with officers from across Council departments to gather detailed evidence on how procurement operates in Swansea.

The Panel concluded its inquiry with a report to Cabinet with 14 recommendations on how to tackle challenges in the long term, medium term, and through some 'quick wins'. Recommendations included various ways for the Council to consider, measure and improve its procurement practices in relation to the natural environment, social values, and localism. The Inquiry final report was presented to Cabinet in June 2022 and all 14 recommendations were subsequently accepted by Cabinet in October 2022.

In October 2023 the Inquiry Panel received a detailed report giving details about progress with the Scrutiny recommendations that had been agreed by Cabinet. They heard that 9 of the 14 recommendations were complete and that good progress had been made with the remaining 5. They were pleased to hear from the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance that the inquiry had been an inclusive and a beneficial piece of work that had helped to further improve procurement within the City and County of Swansea.

Councillors were pleased to hear about positive impact Inquiry has made. They heard that as a result of the Inquiry the profile of the matters raised by the Panel has increased significantly across the entire Council; resulting in a strong commitment to effective Procurement and its importance to the future of the Council's operation and impact on its wider environment. They were reassured to hear that all the necessary pieces are in place to ensure ongoing improvement in those areas where the recommendations are incomplete.

Having held this follow up session the Panel were happy to conclude formal monitoring of the inquiry recommendations.

[Follow Up Letter to Cabinet Member](#)

Creating a Safer Swansea

The Committee is the authority's designated Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee. In discharging this role, the Committee held its annual session in April 2024 focusing on the performance of the Safer Swansea Partnership, looking at partnership priorities, activities, and impact.

Lead representatives from both South Wales Police and the Council, who are involved in the joint-chairing arrangement for the Safer Swansea Partnership Steering Group, attended to present information and take questions on the work of the Safer Swansea Partnership.

This included questions on reporting of Crime & Disorder Statistics; Rape & other serious Sexual Offences; Drugs / Substance Misuse; Burglaries; Car Crimes; dealing with Mental Health issues; PCSO provision; Crime & Disorder reporting and relationship between Police and local Councillors; learning from the Mayhill Disorder; and Hate Crime.

The Committee is planning to follow up in more detail work on Tackling Hate Crime, Community Tensions & Extremism.

On this issue of drugs, the Committee felt that there was a public perception that nothing is being done about drugs and the Police and/or the wider Partnership should do more to put into the public consciousness the work that is being done, whether through social media or other means, to make what it is doing more visible and promote successes, etc. Councillors also felt that more can be done to educate young people about the dangers of drug use.

Committee Letter to the Joint Chairs of the Safer Swansea Partnership can be found here:

[Apr 2024](#)

Partnership Working

The Committee is responsible for scrutinizing the performance of Swansea Public Services Board (PSB) and how it is making a difference. This was discussed during meetings held in Oct 2023 and May 2024.

The PSB is the overarching strategic partnership of public service providers in the area, who work together to improve local services. In October, as part of the ongoing scrutiny, the Committee followed up on the development of the PSB Well-being Plan, which was published in May 2023, and asked about the associated action plan to deliver objectives and how performance against the Plan will be measured. The Committee saw the action plan for 2023/24 which contained actions for each of the 8 Well-being Steps, intended outcomes, milestones, and success measures, with named strategic and operational leads from across the partnership, not just the Council, showing progress / status at Quarter 2.

The session in May 2024 enabled the Committee to look at the PSB Annual Report, which reported on progress the PSB had made during 2023/24 to deliver the Well-being Plan, and the Wellbeing Plan Action Plan, which outlined steps to deliver the PSB Well-being Objectives during 2024/25. It also followed up on issues arising from previous scrutiny sessions, and action taken. The Committee has continued to make suggestions to challenge improvement, including around visibility, the measuring and reporting of performance against objectives and impact, and public engagement.

The Committee suggested that the way the Annual Report is written be kept under review so that each year the PSB consider how it can be better at showing the performance and outcomes against the Plan, balancing the need for something useful for the public and something that satisfies Councillors and those responsible for Scrutiny, so that it is easier to assess success. The Committee was also interested in examples of the PSB's engagement with the public, and intends to have a focussed discussion at the next Scrutiny session in November 2024 on this aspect, looking at relevant activities during 2024.

Committee Letters to the Chair of Swansea PSB can be found here:

[Oct 2023](#)

[May 2024](#)

Tackling Poverty & Enabling Communities

Ensuring that all Council Priorities are sufficiently covered within the Scrutiny Work Programme, the Committee is annually monitoring the delivery of the Corporate Priority on Tackling Poverty & Enabling Communities, to keep close watch on progress, follow up on issues raised, and enable Scrutiny views to influence action and improvement.

A report was provided the Committee in December 2023 with information on progress over the last 12 months, and steps taken to meet objectives. The report presented evidence, insights and intelligence to demonstrate the contributions that have been made in support of this priority, together with relevant indicators / measures of progress, and targets. It covered current challenges, including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and the Council's response, as well as future plans.

The Committee asked about progress in developing a strategic Tackling Poverty Performance Framework to define how we align the objectives, indicators, measures, and outputs relating to tackling poverty, to outcomes - showing to what extent we are achieving, considering the input of resources. The Committee was keen for greater clarity around what indicators mean in terms of impact on people and how this actually translates into reduced poverty. The Committee challenged the Cabinet Member on identifying more outcome-focused measures as part of the Framework, so that we know we are better able to assess the Council's success in meeting stated targets for tackling poverty, and can see change. Councillors noted a commitment to improving the Performance Framework and developing a robust suite of indicators, alongside a refreshed Tackling Poverty Strategy.

There was also discussion around the definition of poverty and what various data and measures tell us. The definition of poverty was not merely related to income and broadening the definition was part of ongoing work. The Committee welcomed a clearer definition of poverty. Questions also were asked about the Council's response to the Cost of Living crisis, and on the response to the Audit Wales national report called 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales,' published in November 2022.

Committee Letter to lead Cabinet Member can be found here: [Dec 2024](#)
Keeping an eye on Bus Services

The Committee takes responsibility for following up on previous Scrutiny Working Groups, to check on progress with the topic / issue(s) and response to any specific suggestions or recommendations made and agreed action coming out of the scrutiny session.

In November 2023, the Committee received an update on action following the Bus Services Scrutiny Working Group, which concluded in March 2022, enabling the Committee to consider progress against recommended improvement and highlight issues where further action may be required.

A report on progress since the Working Group, was provided including update on issues raised by the Working Group. This included reference to developments in relation to cleaner fuel buses, the bus service network and bus emergency scheme, bus and rail links and bus shelters.

The Session benefitted from hearing from the Director of South Wales Transport / Vice-Chair of Coach and Bus Association Cymru, giving the Committee a perspective on things from a local SME bus service operator, particularly in terms of Welsh Government proposed reform / legislation on how bus services are provided in the future, including franchising local bus services.

Discussion focussed on a range of issues, including bus service cuts; communication and engagement between the Council and local bus service providers; transport integration & cross ticketing; and efforts to encourage bus travel. The formal follow up of the Bus Services Scrutiny Working Group was concluded.

Committee Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s) can be found here:

[Nov 2023](#)

Making our roads safer

In January 2024, the Committee also followed up on the Road Safety Working Group which originally met in December 2022 to discuss issues including speed controls (signs, humps and cameras), the new 20mph limits, road conditions and partnership working.

Key issues for follow up was progress on:

- working with operators to improve network / service coverage, reliability, and public satisfaction
- fostering effective dialogue between Councillors and bus operators, as well as public feedback, to raise / discuss service issues
- integration / cross ticketing between bus and rail so services are more coordinated
- any developments in terms of Council playing greater role in provision of bus services
- carbon emission reduction / trial of hydrogen buses
- improvements to bus shelters

A progress report was provided to the Committee, including update on the issues raised by the Working Group and actions taken, as well as updating on progress with the introduction of the new 20mph default limit.

Councillors were pleased to hear that the Council has been successful in reducing the level and intensity of accidents and injury between 2010 and 2022, exceeding Welsh Governments targets. It was noted that locally it may take up to three years to get a clear understanding of how change in speed limit has impacted on the network of roads in the wider Swansea area, in terms of collision and casualty reduction. Committee questions and discussion focussed on the 20mph Implementation; Safety Around Schools – including issues around School Crossing Control provision, and signage / banner outside schools on road safety; Active Travel and safety on shared use paths.

The formal follow up of the Road Safety Scrutiny Working Group was concluded. Committee Letter to relevant Cabinet Member, and their response, can be found here: [Jan 2024](#)

[Response](#)

Maintaining Public Rights of Way

The Public Rights of Way Scrutiny Working Group met in November 2023 for an overview of Public Rights of Way (PROW) across Swansea (mapping / numbers) and discussed a range of issues, including impacts on PROW from developments and the effect on communities.

The Working Group received a comprehensive report and praised the work of the Countryside Access Team, which includes a 10-year Countryside Action Plan due to be adopted in Spring 2024. The Team had reduced in size over the last few years leaving 3 Countryside Access Officers and a Team Leader. This had left them vulnerable to unforeseen circumstances for instance, staff illness. A wider Team restructure was imminent, and the Working Group hoped this will provide wider Team support. To support the Team further, particularly with pathway maintenance, it suggested considering apprenticeships.

The Working Group requested the Cabinet Member lobby the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) about legislation in Wales to avoid the duplication of diversion orders which currently takes place. These changes have already been made in England. The Cabinet Member agreed to write to WLGA and Welsh Government. Councillors also recommended integrating the PROW and Active Travel routes. The Cabinet Member recognised the developing crossover of PROW and Active Travel routes however felt the purposes of both were different.

Other areas discussed at the Working Group include partnership working and marketing. Overall it felt that the PROW in Swansea were an asset with huge value for money. Resources were a concern and the Working Group felt that if footfall and usage increases this may demonstrate the need for increased budgets.

The Working Group was concluded in November 2023. Working Group recommendations will be followed up by the Scrutiny Programme Committee during 2024-25.

Working Group Letter to relevant Cabinet Member, and their response, can be found here:

[Nov 2023](#)

[Response](#)

Improving Customer Contact

The Customer Contact Scrutiny Working Group came together for a focussed discussion & questioning on the user experience when contacting the Council / accessing services whether by telephone or on-line / through digital means; response rates; provision for offline and on-line contact; effectiveness of Council Contact Centre; on-going actions to improve digital inclusion / access; quality of website, etc.

The Working Group received an overview of the Council's performance and plans for developing customer contact channels, an update on customer contact transformation projects and the new Customer Contact Strategic Framework. Officers provided call handling data including abandoned calls and information on face to face contact. Additionally, an update on digital inclusion and the Council's Digital Transformation Programme was received.

The Working Group asked questions about abandoned calls and ways to reduce this number, challenges with the automated switchboard, complaints and future plans. The Working Group heard that there has been a steady decrease in calls and face to face contact in favour of online communication. Councillors made some specific recommendations including accurate return dates on internal out of office messages, clearly spoken automated messages, use of a phone queue system, call back options, staff awareness of the Customer Charter and Standards with checks in place to ensure compliance, automated response messages to include how long a response may take and use of the word "residents" instead of "customer" where appropriate. The Cabinet Member agreed with all the Scrutiny recommendations, some of which have already been rolled out and some will be rolled out in due course.

The Working Group was concluded in February 2024. Working Group recommendations will be followed up by the Scrutiny Programme Committee during 2024-25.

Working Group Letter to relevant Cabinet Member, and their response,
can be found here:

[Feb 2024](#)

[Response](#)

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Influencing Cabinet decisions

With Pre-Decision Scrutiny, the Committee can consider Cabinet reports and give views on the proposed decision(s). It is an important practice where Scrutiny Councillors look at a planned decision shortly before it is made by Cabinet. Scrutiny Councillors bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than that provided by Cabinet members or officers, which can help decisions to be more robust.

Pre-decision Scrutiny can help Councillors to understand what is being proposed and rationale, and considering decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence and possibly improve them. It gives Scrutiny Councillors an opportunity to challenge, for example, how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision and how those risks might be mitigated. Relevant Cabinet Members and officers will attend Scrutiny to present and explain proposals and answer questions. Committee views will be formally communicated to Cabinet Member(s) after the meeting, and the Chair can then attend the Cabinet meeting to convey those views for Cabinet's attention before any decision is taken. Cabinet should provide explanation of any rejection of Scrutiny views.

In October 2023 the Committee considered a Cabinet report on the Council's move to a new Oracle IT system. The report provided an update on the Oracle Fusion system implementation, which had gone live in April 2023, with Cabinet being asked to approve budget for pending change requests from services and any additional in-year licence costs following review. The Committee had followed progress over the last few years with concern about rising costs of the Oracle Project. The Committee took the opportunity to seek clarity on total project cost, as well as explore whether the new system was functioning well and as planned, how successful the implementation has been, notable achievements / benefits, and whether there have been any issue(s) arising concerning any aspect of the project and modules, including how this project has addressed any relevant areas of corporate risk and/or governance issues.

The Committee offered some views on the report / planned decision for Cabinet's attention, relating to project cost, the contingency budget, and ongoing costs. Committee Letter: [Oct 2023](#)

Calling In Cabinet Decisions

Councillors can 'Call In' any decisions made by Cabinet, which leads to a meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. The Committee considers the concerns raised about the Cabinet decision and will make recommendation(s) back to Cabinet.

Along with Pre-decision Scrutiny, 'Call In' provides a powerful tool to ensure a 'check and balance' on executive decision making.

Concerns were raised, via the Council's Call-in Process, on a Cabinet decision made in January 2024 on a 'Customer Charter and Service Standards Framework'. The Committee considered this matter in February, hearing from the concerned Councillors, the lead Cabinet Member and officers.

The concern centred on the timescale of 28 working days that had been agreed for the processing of applications for Free School Meals, i.e. almost six calendar weeks, and adverse impact of the lengthy process on the children and their welfare, which the Councillor(s) felt was not consistent with the Council's commitment to the UNCRC and Tackling Poverty; and Cabinet not being aware of these concerns despite being raised in advance of decision at one of the Council's Service Transformation Committees.

Following discussion, the Committee recommended that the Cabinet decision regarding approval of the Customer Charter & Service Standards Framework be reconsidered, in light of the concern raised, and in line with the Chief Executive's proposed way forward which had been reported to the Committee. This was agreed by the lead Cabinet Member, who had delegated authority to make the necessary changes.

Reference was also made in the meeting to approaches in other Council's in the UK suggesting that it may be possible to further reduce processing timescales, so the Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member(s) should commit to looking at that to explore the potential for further improvement in the Service Standard.

Committee Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s): [Feb 2024](#)

Monitoring Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance

The overarching remit of the Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel is to monitor the Council's budget, and corporate and service improvement arrangements, keeping an overview of the Council's performance and finances, acting as a critical friend for the Cabinet and helping to ensure accountability. The Panel is also responsible for ongoing monitoring of Council performance in relation to development and regeneration, including the 'health' of the city centre, wider economic development across Swansea and discussion about progress on the Swansea Bay City Deal. The Panel meets monthly.

Every year the Panel scrutinizes Council spending which is set by the Council which agrees an Annual Budget each March for the following year. The proposed Council budget for 2023/24 was presented to the Panel in February 2024, ahead of consideration by Cabinet. Given the breadth of services covered by the budget, the two Social Services Panels and the Education Performance Panel reviewed respective budgets with lead Cabinet Members and officers, and passed their views to the Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance Panel to include in the Panel's overall feedback to Cabinet.

Scrutiny Councillors' budget questions centred around service pressures, future uncertainty, schools reserves, the fire services levy and the Minimum Revenue Provision. The Panel reflected their thoughts to Cabinet regarding the challenging circumstances and the potential for further announcements. They reflected their disappointment that the Corporate Joint Committee levy had only been decreased by 10% and concerns with the level of debt financing. These points were raised by the Panel Convener at the Cabinet meeting. More information was provided by letter response on City Deal funding, roles within the Welsh Translation Unit and changes to IT systems. Scrutiny carries out budget monitoring on an on-going basis at least quarterly.

The Panel wrote to relevant Cabinet Member(s) following each meeting to give views, raise concerns and make recommendations. This includes monitoring the Council's response to recommendation for improvement made by Audit Wales.

In April 2024 the Panel consider the Audit Wales Report – “Cracks in the Foundations” Building Safety in Wales. The Panel found the national report findings concerning and were pleased that the Council was beginning to take action on the recommendations raised. It asked numerous questions regarding succession planning, financial resilience and collaboration to secure this service going forward and its commercial resilience. It requested that the annual report of Building Control is brought to this Panel and agreed with the Cabinet Member that an independent reserve is needed to secure this service going forward.

Councillors also reviewed the Swansea Arena project after one year of trading. The Panel received a comprehensive summary of the Arenas performance and asked questions on lessons learned and heard that improvements were being made to exiting the car park and staffing levels as well as becoming accustomed to the venue. The Arena’s relationship with other local venues and targets for year two were also discussed. The Panel felt it was important to scrutinise the Arena’s first year due to ensure the financial investment has been used wisely to ensure the benefit of the people of Swansea.

Panel Letters to relevant Cabinet Member(s) can be found [here](#)

Monitoring Climate Change & the Natural Environment

The Climate Change & Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel is responsible for ongoing monitoring of performance in relation to climate change and the natural environment, and has been monitoring the delivery of the Council's work, commitments, and implementation of agreed plans, to assess progress.

Amongst specific topics covered over the last year were:

- The Council's Climate Change Action Plan
- Water Quality and Management
- Green Vehicle Adoption
- Weed Management / Use of Glyphosate
- Air Quality Management
- Local Flood Risk Management

The Panel discussed Climate Change in May 2024, including achievement against Corporate Priorities. The Panel asked about various aspects including Public Electric Vehicle Charging, Battery Recycling, Green Energy, Recycling and was particularly interested to hear what the biggest challenges are in terms of both Climate Change and Nature to achieving goals apart from money, and if there is anything else the Panel could do to help.

The Panel was informed there are several challenges. For 2030, for example, in terms of greening the fleet, with a fleet of 900 vehicles if all electric vehicles were purchased there would be difficulties in terms of infrastructure. Also, the cost of a hydrogen refuse vehicle is 3 times the cost of diesel and the Council is waiting for industry and economies of scales to make those vehicles more affordable. The Panel heard it has helped on these issues with its input, debate and discussion, which is really valuable.

In terms of 2050, the Panel heard there will be opportunity for wider engagement and Councillors as community leaders can support this by engaging with communities about reducing energy usage, rollout of greener technologies and potential grants which could be accessible. Also, many Councillors are governors and have strong links to schools and there is an educational toolkit the Directorate is keen for councillors

to champion, looking at energy usage within public buildings. The Panel also heard about other examples where it can help.

In addition, a Panel Member stated the University has been running a Green Impact Project to help reduce energy usage and encourage employee behaviour change, and asked if the Council would consider doing something similar, where every section of the Council is looking at energy and water usage and ways to save energy and money, and it is undertaken by the departments themselves. The Cabinet Member stated it is really important as public sector partners that we share good practice, and this is a really good example of this, and confirmed the Directorate is interested and will look at it in more detail to see how the Council could potentially roll it out itself.

Panel Letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s), and their response, can be found here:

[May 2024
Response](#)

Monitoring Education & Learning

The Education Scrutiny Performance Panel meets monthly, with a varied work plan, and where possible involve schools in their Scrutiny activity. Some of the activity they completed this year included:

- Meeting the Headteachers and Chair of Governors of two schools, Gorseinon Primary School and Clydach Primary School. The Panel meet with a selection of schools each year to discuss their School Improvement Plan and on some occasions make a site visit to see work happening on the ground at the school. The Panel were reassured from their discussions with the Headteachers, Chair of Governors and the School Improvement Adviser from both schools, agreeing that progress was being made across their School Improvement Plans and with their Estyn recommendations. The Panel believe that both schools now have a good basis for them to continue to build upon those improvements.
- The Panel, at their meeting in April, heard from Dr Andrews about the recent research completed into Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) education by Bangor University and then from Swansea's Religion, Values and Ethics Adviser about the work happening in Swansea. In 2023 the National Centre for Religious Education at Bangor University undertook research to explore how RVE was embedded within the Curriculum for Wales. The Panel heard that the research did highlight shortcomings in relation to RVE education in Wales including several areas where statutory obligations are not being met.

The Panel felt that it did seem that the teaching of RVE was reduced or even watered down within the new curriculum with it becoming part of the humanities subject area rather than being a standalone subject. They were concerned about the limited time that is given over to the subject in the curriculum by schools and about the lack of teacher training for new teachers on the matter.

The Panel were pleased to hear that Swansea Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) has secured funding to improve the resources available to schools on the subject and that in Swansea we are further ahead than many other local authorities. They did feel that although this may be the case, there is a lot more to do to improve RVE in Swansea schools, which was evident from the declining number of pupils who are entered for examinations or taking the subject at GCSE and A 'Level. They were told that SACRE are

continuing to investigate this decline. The Panel felt that it was important to follow up upon this again, especially given that it is a statutory requirement. It has therefore been scheduled into the education scrutiny work plan for the coming year.

- In April, the Panel looked at the work completed to listen to the voices of children and young people in relation to education services. They were encouraged to hear about the amount of activity that is taking place not only in education settings but also more widely in the community to engage with and gain the views of young people. They heard that this is completed by both the education directorate and the Partnership and Involvement Team from Social Services. They were pleased to see the different ways in which young people's voices are gathered and then included in decision making here in Swansea and were particularly interested in how those quiet voices are gained and how they are fed into departments across the council.

More information about these and other issues discussed [here](#).

Monitoring Children's Social Services

Councillors on the Child & Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel meet regularly to provide ongoing challenge to the performance of Children's Social Services, to ensure that good performance is maintained, and monitor service change and improvement across all areas of the service.

The Panel regularly receives a performance monitoring report on Child and Family Services which includes data on the Single Point of Contact, Supported Care Planning, Fostering and Adoption, Safeguarding, Youth Offending Service and Staff Wellbeing.

As well as considering the performance monitoring report, discussions over the past year were held on several specific topics:

- Regional Adoption Service
- Residential Care Services (including Ty Nant)
- Young Carers
- Adolescent Strategy and Action Plan
- Regional Safeguarding Board
- Safeguarding Quality Unit Annual Report
- Commissioning Reviews
- Child and Family Improvement Programme
- Contextual Missing Exploited & Trafficked (CMET)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Corporate Parenting Board
- Draft Budget Proposals
- Youth Offending Service
- Complaints Annual Report
- Delivery of Corporate Priorities

At its meeting in September 2023 the Panel was pleased to receive a video presentation from young carers on the Young Carers Forum, who have helped shape a Plan to support young carers.

The Panel heard that in Swansea, on average, there are three young carers in every single classroom, matching UK statistics, so the number

is significant. The Panel was interested to hear how the Service finds out how many young carers there are and what percentage are being reached. The Panel heard awareness has been raised through 'Understanding Young Carers' professional training and that young carers are identified through PSE sessions held in schools, where they listen to a presentation, engage in activities, and complete a questionnaire stating if they would like to identify as a young carer. They can then access support in school through lunchtime clubs or can access support within the YMCA. The Panel was informed that more and more referrals are being received for young carers, who are offered different support from training to trips and activities. The Panel also heard the Service is growing as it is receiving so many referrals, and from a Service point of view would benefit from more workers to ensure the support is there at the right time and the quality of service does not fall.

The Panel heard that in feedback from young carers, one of the main things is to ensure all schools are on board and that there is a champion for every school. Officers confirmed teacher representatives sit on the Young Carers Forum, and information has been sent out to all schools around young carer training and team managers in Education have been asked for young carer champion representatives.

The Panel commented on the language used in the presentation and felt it was quite grown up. The Panel felt that if it was going to be used in schools with younger children it would be helpful to use simpler language and be a bit more 'fun'.

The Panel queried how long the YMCA Young Carers Service has been running, and where they are in the journey, and heard it was set up seven years ago. Officers commented that they feel it has been successful because young carers have shaped it and told the Service exactly what they need. The Panel felt very positive about where the Service is going with this and was grateful for all the work that has been done.

More information about the issues discussed [here](#).

Monitoring Adult Services

Like the Child & Family Services Performance Panel, Scrutiny Councillors met every six weeks to focus on the performance of Adult Social Services.

The Panel has regularly received performance management reports, including relevant data, to review things and ask questions about performance and improvement, focusing on outcomes, provision and leadership. This provides a regular 'health check' on Adult Services activity to facilitate challenge by the Panel. The Panel also considered the Director of Social Services' Statutory Annual Report for 2022-23.

As well as looking at overall performance, discussions were held over the past year on several specific topics:

- Recent Care Inspectorate Wales Care Home Inspection Reports
- Wales Audit Office Report 'Together we Can' – Community Resilience and Self-reliance
- Tackling Poverty Service Grants 2022-23: Impact Report
- Additional Direct Payments Information
- Wales Audit Office Report 'A Missed Opportunity' Social Enterprises
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Dementia (including case studies)
- Adult Services Transformation and Improvement Programme
- Local Area Coordination
- Draft Budget Proposals
- West Glamorgan Transformation Programme
- Annual Review of Charges (Social Services) 2023-24
- Briefing on Llais
- Delivery of Corporate Objectives and Policy Commitments.

The Panel wrote to relevant Cabinet Member(s) following each meeting to give views, raise concerns and make recommendations, for example, in January 2024 the Panel received a presentation showing some examples of the impact Local Area Coordination (LAC) has made. A full impact report for 2023-24 is due to be discussed at the Panel in October 2024.

The Panel expressed concern about the possible loss of LAC posts due to financial pressures and requested more information. The Panel was informed consultation was being carried out with staff due to the impact of funding of the LAC Team. The Panel heard costs have increased and although there has been no cut to Council funding for 2024-25, it is flat, and grant funding which makes up 60% of the total funding has been reduced. The Panel also heard no decisions have been made yet and there are a number of things being considered, including criteria and geography.

The Panel requested a breakdown of costs, including how the funding is distributed and where the funding comes from etc. The Panel also requested data on the consequential impact of LAC as the Panel felt there must be a way of measuring this and the negative impact there would have been on various services without it, and the huge cost saving that has been made as this would be very helpful in providing evidence of the benefit of LAC.

The Panel heard two studies are being undertaken and they are awaiting the results. Everyone agreed the evidence base about the cost impact as well as the social benefits of LAC are important. The Panel asked for a guarantee there will still be full coverage of LAC across the Swansea City Council area and was informed this is part of what must be considered.

The Panel feels LACs have been doing an excellent job and have made a huge difference and wished to emphasise that it is strongly against losing any LAC posts.

More information about the issues discussed [here](#).