



Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 19 November 2024

Scrutiny Work Programme

Purpose	This report shows the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024/25, which the Committee is responsible for monitoring.
Content	The agreed work programme is attached, which shows the topics being examined by Scrutiny through various Panels and Working Groups. A plan for future Committee meetings is also attached.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plan for the Committee meetings ahead• consider opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny• review the Scrutiny Work Programme (including progress of current Panels and Working Groups)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
Report Author	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer:	Adrian Jeremiah
Finance Officer:	Amanda Thomas

1. Introduction

1.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing the Council's Scrutiny Work Programme and managing the overall work of scrutiny to ensure that it is as effective as possible.

1.2 A report is provided to each meeting to enable the Committee to maintain an overview of agreed Scrutiny activities, monitor progress, and coordinate work as necessary.

1.3 The broad aim of the Scrutiny function is to engage non-executive councillors in activities to:

- provide an effective challenge to the executive
- help improve services, policies, and performance

- engage the public in its work
- 1.4 The Scrutiny Work Programme is guided by the overriding principle that the work of Scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of time and resources.

It also needs to be:

- manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available to support activities
 - relevant to Council priorities
 - adding value and having maximum impact
 - coordinated and avoids duplication
- 1.5 The work of Scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the Committee itself, by establishing informal Panels (for in-depth activities) or via one-off Working Groups. Panels and Working Groups would be open to all non-executive Councillors - the Committee will determine membership and conveners following expressions of interest.
- 1.6 Scrutiny will regularly send letters to Cabinet Members communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement and, where appropriate, by producing reports. Inquiry panels will always produce a final report at the end of the inquiry with conclusions and recommendations for Cabinet (and other decision-makers), informed by the evidence gathered. Inquiry panels will reconvene to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and the impact of their work – usually 6-12 months following cabinet decision.
- 1.7 Although much of the work of Scrutiny is carried out by informal Panels and Working Groups these meetings are accessible to the public. Agendas, reports and letters relating to all such scrutiny activities are published, in the same manner as the committee, on the Council's modern.gov online platform:
<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

2. Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

- 2.1.1 The Committee agreed the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2024/25 on 16 July 2024. This is shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.1.2. The following paragraphs break down the Work Programme by specific ways of working to provide a brief overview.
- 2.2 Scrutiny Programme Committee:
- 2.2.1 The Committee work plan for the year ahead is attached in **Appendix 2**. This should be kept under constant review to ensure it represents a robust, manageable, and effective plan.

2.2.2 Committee members should always review and confirm items for the next and future meetings considering who should attend and confirm expectations so that meetings are always well planned and prepared for, e.g., information required and key questions that the Committee wishes to ask.

2.2.3 The main item(s) scheduled for the next Committee meeting are:

10 December:

- **Delivery of Corporate Priority – Tackling Poverty & Enabling Communities** (annual item)

The Committee will review action and achievements in the delivery of the Council priority over the past year. The Leader and the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing will report to the Committee, having lead portfolio responsibility for tackling poverty. Relevant lead officer(s) will also attend to support the Cabinet Member(s) and Committee discussion.

- **Welsh Housing Quality Standard Annual Progress Report**

The Cabinet Member for Service Transformation, along with lead officer(s), will report on progress in meeting the Welsh Government's Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

- **Scrutiny of Cabinet Member Portfolio Responsibilities: More Homes Delivery**

The Cabinet Member for Service Transformation, along with lead officer(s), will report on actions and performance regarding one of their Cabinet portfolio responsibilities, and answer questions. The session will focus on More Homes Delivery, enabling the Committee to provide challenge, as well as helping to inform future thinking.

- **Annual Complaints & Compliments Reports 2023-24**

The Cabinet Member for Service Transformation, will attend along with lead officer(s), to report to the Committee and answer questions on

2.2.4 The Committee will have the opportunity to review priorities and introduce issues of concern as and when they arise, e.g., Pre-decision Scrutiny or Call-In which may require extra meetings.

2.2.5 Pre-decision Scrutiny – this is carried out by the Committee unless delegated elsewhere. The Committee is invited to consider the available information on future Cabinet business and any opportunities for pre-decision Scrutiny, taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications (see Cabinet Forward Plan attached in **Appendix 3**). Any requests will require discussion with relevant Cabinet Member(s) to confirm timescales and window of opportunity for scrutiny involvement. Pre-decision Scrutiny enables Scrutiny to develop understanding about and ask questions on proposed Cabinet

reports to provide ‘critical friend’ challenge and influence decision-making.

2.3 Inquiry Panels:

- 2.3.1 Once membership and a convener have been appointed the first task of an Inquiry Panel will be to have a briefing on the issue and then determine the key question and terms of reference for the inquiry. Once the planning stage is complete, the inquiry will be evidence gathering, with the last stage being to develop the final report.

In Progress / Planned	Completed (follow up stage)
<p>1. Community Assets (Final report stage. Final Report now agreed by Panel and being reported to November’s Committee meeting to approve its submission to Cabinet for decision)</p> <p>2. Grants (initial meeting to be arranged following agreement of membership and conclusion of Community Assets Inquiry)</p>	<p>1. Anti-Social Behaviour (Follow up meeting scheduled for 13 March 2025)</p>

2.4 Performance Panels:

- 2.4.1 The following Performance Panels, which enable regular and structured monitoring of performance within these key areas, have been agreed and will meet on an ongoing basis until otherwise agreed by the Committee (frequency of meetings in brackets):

Performance Panel	Convener
1. Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance (monthly)	Cllr. Chris Holley
2. Education (monthly)	Cllr. Lyndon Jones
3. Adult Services (every six weeks)	Cllr. Susan Jones
4. Child & Family Services (every six weeks)	Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams
5. Climate Change & Nature (every two months)	Cllr. Mary Jones

- 2.4.2 Performance Panel conveners are scheduled to provide a regular update to the Committee to enable discussion on key activities and impact.

2.5 Working Groups:

- 2.5.1 The following Working Groups will be convened during the year ahead, (date where known in brackets):

1. Agile Working (20 Jan 2025) 2. Public Engagement (5 Feb 2025)	3. Empty Properties 4. Trees
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2.6 Joint / Regional Scrutiny:

2.6.1 **Partneriaeth** – A Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group, comprising of Education Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, or equivalent, across Swansea Council, Carmarthenshire Council and Pembrokeshire Councils scrutinises the work of the new regional education partnership which will support the delivery of school improvement, and ensure greater public accountability over decisions made. Scrutiny will seek reassurance and consider if the Partnership is operating according to the Joint Committee Agreement, and its Business Plan, and is being managed effectively. The Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and Convener of the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel are participating in the Scrutiny of Partneriaeth. The Partneriaeth Joint Committee, comprises the Leaders of the three Councils, as the strategic decision-making body. The Swansea Scrutiny Team manages support for the Scrutiny of Partneriaeth.

2.6.2 **Swansea Bay City Region City Deal** – Swansea Scrutiny is also involved in the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee, approved by Council in July 2018. This arrangement involves three councillor representatives from each of the four Councils involved in the City Region, meeting to scrutinise the work of the Joint Committee responsible for delivering the City Deal programme. As per the Joint Committee Agreement, the Scrutiny Committee is serviced by Neath Port Talbot Council. Swansea Scrutiny Councillor representatives are currently: Jan Curtice, Victoria Holland & Chris Holley.

2.6.3 **South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee** – The Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) involves Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire Councils, as well as Brecon Beacons and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authorities, and will exercise functions relating to strategic land use planning, regional transport planning and the exercise of economic well-being powers. The Committee has set up a CJC Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee which consists of three elected members from each Council and will meet at least quarterly. The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee will scrutinise the decisions / actions of the CJC as it discharges its functions and performance in relation to policy objectives and targets. The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee is being serviced by Neath Port Talbot Council. Swansea Scrutiny Councillor representatives are currently: Peter Black, Wendy Lewis & Mike White.

2.6.4 The Scrutiny Programme Committee will need to ensure that there is no duplication between local and regional scrutiny. A regular update on regional Scrutiny activity will be provided to Committee members to ensure awareness. Regional Scrutiny arrangements will not, however, preclude Councillors within constituent Councils discussing the impact of the regional body on their Council and locality, and holding Cabinet Members to account for their involvement / Council's involvement and engagement in regional bodies, and relevant local decision-making.

3. Monitoring the Work Programme

3.1 The Committee is responsible for monitoring progress against the agreed Work Programme, and this includes work undertaken by the informal Panels and Working Groups and findings, to ensure that this work is effective and has the required visibility.

3.2 A timetable of all Scrutiny activities (projected or actual where dates are known) is attached in **Appendix 4a**. Lead Councillors and officers are also noted within. **Appendix 4b** provides the Committee with a snapshot of progress with all Panels and Working Groups established by the Committee, as well as Regional Scrutiny, and their current position. This will be updated and provided to every Committee meeting.

3.3 The Scrutiny Work Programme will be kept under constant review by the Committee, with changes made as necessary. The Committee will always retain the flexibility to adapt and re-prioritise the work of scrutiny in response to changing circumstances and/or urgent issues which may arise in-year, to ensure the continued relevance of the programme.

3.4 The Committee should be mindful of the work plans of other Council bodies, such as the Governance & Audit Committee and the Council's Service Transformation Committees. Any issues regarding possible overlap / duplication will be discussed between the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and relevant Chairs.

4. Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action

4.1 Members of the public are able to make requests for Scrutiny by contacting the Chair or Scrutiny Team in writing detailing the issue of concern, its impact, and suggested action. This can be via the Council's website: www.swansea.gov.uk/raiseanissuetoscrutiny or email to scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk. In accordance with agreed protocol the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee will consider any requests received. Taking into account relevant advice, any such issues may merit inclusion in the work programme, referral elsewhere, or no action.

4.2 Since the last Committee meeting in October, three members of the public have contacted Scrutiny via the website. Two were essentially complaints or service requests and referred accordingly to the Council's Complaints Team to deal with. The third related to School Uniform. Although School Uniform policy is a matter for individual schools and governing bodies a general query was raised which has been referred to the Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, for them to respond directly.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Any costs that arise out of work plan activities, for example expenses for witnesses or transport costs, are not envisaged to be significant and will be contained within the existing Scrutiny Budget.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Agreed Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25

Appendix 2: Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan 2024/25

Appendix 3: Cabinet Forward Plan

Appendix 4a: Scrutiny Work Programme – Projected Timetable of Activity

Appendix 4b: Progress Report – Current Scrutiny Panels, Working Groups, Regional Scrutiny