

Progress Report – Current Scrutiny Panels / Working Groups / Regional Scrutiny

1. Inquiry Panels:

These will undertake in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis and will be expected to take around six months to complete to enable wide-ranging evidence gathering, and production of a final report with conclusions and recommendations that will be presented to Cabinet (and / or other decision-makers).

a) **Community Assets** (convener: Cllr Stuart Rice)

Key Question: *How can the Council ensure that its community assets are working to provide the best outcomes for the people of Swansea?*

Progress Bar:

Planning				Evidence Gathering				Draft Final Report			

The Panel have concluded their inquiry and met on 4 November to discuss and agree their final report to Cabinet, which will be submitted to Scrutiny Programme Committee in November and onto the next available Cabinet meeting.

b) **Grants** (convener: Cllr Joe Hale)

Key Question: *to be agreed*

Progress Bar:

Planning				Evidence Gathering				Draft Final Report			

The Committee agreed the membership / convener of the new Inquiry Panel in September. The Inquiry will commence following conclusion of the Community Assets Inquiry. An initial meeting will be arranged for the Councillors to have a briefing on the topic which will help the Panel to consider the focus for the Scrutiny Inquiry and Terms of Reference / Key Question that the Inquiry will explore.

2. Follow Up on Completed Inquiries:

Follow-ups of inquiries will consider both the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and wider impact / difference made. Inquiry Panels are reconvened between 9-12 months after Cabinet decision on Inquiry reports.

Inquiry	Cabinet Decision	Recommendations			Follow Up Panel Meeting
		Agreed	Partly	Not Agreed	
Anti-Social Behaviour	18 Apr 2024	21	1	2	tba

3. Performance Panels:

Performance Panels enable regular and structured in-depth monitoring of performance and challenge within these key areas:

a) **Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance** (convener: Cllr Chris Holley)

This Panel meets every month. A detailed progress report appears under Agenda Item 8.

b) **Education** (convener: Cllr Lyndon Jones)

This Panel meets every month. The last meeting on 17 October involved a visit to Gwyrosydd Primary School to discuss their school improvement plan.

At the Panel meeting on 21 November there will be discussion on the strategy for poverty proofing the school day given the cost-of-living crisis. The Panel will also consider progress with the Inclusion Strategy approved by Cabinet in 2023 as well as progress with regard to the Behaviour Strategy. There will also be discussion on School Admissions Policy, and Career Advice in Swansea Schools.

c) **Adult Services** (convener: Cllr Susan Jones)

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. At its meeting on 29 October the Panel looked at Implementation of the Regional Partnership Board's Mental Health Strategy, received an update on Local Area Coordination including the Impact Report for 2023-24 and discussed the latest Performance Monitoring Report.

The next meeting on 11 December will focus on the Adult Services/Child and Family Services Complaints Annual Report 2023-24, the Director of Social Services Annual Report 2023-24 and receive a briefing on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

d) **Child & Family Services** (convener: Cllr Paxton Hood-Williams)

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. At its meeting on 12 November the panel received an update from the Regional Safeguarding Board and discussed the Safeguarding Quality Unit Annual Report.

At its next meeting on 7 January the Panel will discuss the latest Performance Monitoring Report and receive an update on the Child and Family Improvement Programme.

e) **Climate Change & Nature** (convener: Cllr Mary Jones)

This Panel meets every two months. At its meeting 19 November the Panel will receive a briefing on the new Waste Strategy / Recycling and will discuss Water Quality, Management and Pollution Control.

The meeting on 21 January will look at the Sustainable Transport Strategy including Electric Vehicle Charging Point Provision and discuss Renewable Energy / Local Area Energy Plan.

4. Regional Scrutiny:

This is collaborative Scrutiny with other Local Authorities for topics / issues of shared interest or concern, and models of regional working.

a) **Partneriaeth - Regional Education Partnership**

Partneriaeth Scrutiny is expected to take place every school term, mirroring meetings of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee.

At the meeting on 24 June the regional Scrutiny Councillor Group spoke to the Chair of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee and Directors of the three local authorities to seek reassurance and to consider if Partneriaeth is operating according to the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and its timetable is being managed effectively. They also looked at the risk profile and progress with supporting the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales.

The Group meets again on 18 November and will have feedback from the Partneriaeth Joint Committee held on 18 October. The agenda also includes a look at progress in delivering Partneriaeth Priorities (Priority 1 Support all schools and educational settings to design and deliver their own high-quality provision in commissioned subjects; Priority 2 - Provide career pathways for leaders, practitioners and support staff at all levels of the system).

b) **Swansea Bay City Region City Deal**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee usually meets every two months. As well as overall programme / project monitoring including the latest financial position, the meeting on 25 June included specific update on the 'Homes as Power Stations' project. The Committee also considered a 'Assurance & Risk Assessment' report from Audit Wales which looked at the effectiveness of the City deal's existing management arrangements and how it supports the effective & efficient delivery of the City deal portfolio.

The last meeting took place on 8 October to consider the Swansea Bay City Deal Annual Report; Pre-Audit Annual Statement of Accounts and a Construction Impact Assessment Review Report. The next meeting is planned for 13 January 2025 (moved from December).

The Joint Scrutiny Committee is supported by Scrutiny Officers in Neath Port Talbot Council and agendas / minutes of meetings can be found on-line:

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=417>

c) **South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee**

The CJC Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee will meet at least quarterly.

The last meeting held on 14 October considered a report on General Progress of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee 2023/24 which set out the governance arrangements that are in place and progress of the functions of the Corporate Joint Committee, in relation to regional transport, energy, economic wellbeing, economic development and strategic planning. The report also considered priorities for Autumn 2024 onwards.

The next meeting on 21 November will feature discussion on Draft Regional Transport Plan / Delivery Plan; Financial / Budget Monitoring; and Regional Energy Policy.

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5. **Working Groups:**

A number of topics have been identified which will be dealt with through one-off Working Groups. These enable a 'light-touch' approach to specific topics of concern and will be planned as a one-off meeting, progressed one at a time, primarily involving discussion with relevant Cabinet Member(s) / officer(s), and any other persons called, to gather information, ask questions, and give views / raise any concerns.

a) **Agile Working** (convener: Councillor Stuart Rice)

This Working Group will take place on 20 January 2025. It will enable focussed questioning & discussion on the evaluation of 'success' of agile working policy incl. working from home; how the council is managing its staff post pandemic; impact on Council performance / efficiency; implications on Council's accommodation strategy; impact on staff well-being / morale; permanence of situation / future direction, etc.

b) **Public Engagement** (convener: Councillor Lyndon Jones)

This Working Group will take place on 5 February 2025. It will enable focussed questioning & discussion, examination / evaluation of existing approaches to public engagement and how we can improve so that we reach all parts of society; evaluation of Council's resident's survey etc.

c) **Empty Properties** (convener: Councillor Francesca O'Brien)

This will enable focussed questioning & discussion on what's being done to help bring empty properties back into use / repurposed; enforcement; given housing needs what steps are being taken to bring empty properties back into use, etc.

d) **Trees** (convener: Councillor Peter May)

This will enable focussed questioning & discussion on tree services, management and development; tree planting strategy; tree protection orders; tree inspection programme; role and responsibility of the Council and landowners; tree maintenance – capacity to look after the many trees the Council has planted; opportunities / spaces for rewilding / tree planting, ash dieback issue, etc.