



Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 8 April 2025

Scrutiny Letters

Purpose:	To ensure the Committee is aware of the Scrutiny Letters produced following various Scrutiny activities, and to track responses to date.
Content:	The report includes a log of Scrutiny Letters produced this municipal year and provides a copy of correspondence between Scrutiny and Cabinet Members for discussion as required.
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the Scrutiny Letters and responses• Make comments, observations and recommendations as necessary
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer:	Debbie Smith, Chief Legal Officer & Monitoring Officer
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The production of Scrutiny Letters has become an established part of the way Scrutiny operates in Swansea. Letters from the Chair (or Conveners) allow Scrutiny to communicate directly and quickly with relevant Cabinet Members.
- 1.2 These letters are used to convey views and conclusions about particular issues discussed, and provide the opportunity to raise concerns, ask for further information, and make recommendations. This enables Scrutiny to engage with Cabinet Members on a regular and structured basis.

2. Reporting of Letters

- 2.1 All Scrutiny Letters, whether they are written by the Scrutiny Programme Committee or conveners of Panels / Working Groups, are published to ensure visibility, of the outcomes from meetings, across the Council and public.
- 2.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee agenda also includes a copy of letters to/from Cabinet Members for its attention and discussion as required, e.g., letters relating to the work of the Committee, Working Groups, and Inquiry Panel follow ups. Letters are included when Cabinet Member responses that were awaited are received or where a Scrutiny Letter did not require a response.
- 2.3 Where requested Cabinet Members are expected to respond in writing to Scrutiny Letters within 21 calendar days. The response should indicate what action (if any) they intend to take, or have taken, as a result of the views and recommendations made.
- 2.4 Letters relating to the work of Performance Panels are part of an ongoing dialogue with Cabinet Members and are therefore reported back and monitored by each Panel. However, all Performance Panel Conveners will provide a progress report to the Committee, including summary of correspondence with Cabinet Members and outcomes.

3. Letters Log

- 3.1 This report contains a log of Scrutiny Letters produced to enable the Committee to maintain an overview of letters activity over the current 2024-25 municipal year – see **Appendix 1**. The Letters Log will show the average time taken by Cabinet Members to respond to Scrutiny letters, and the percentage of letters responded to within timescale. For comparison, during the previous year (2023/24) 68 letters were sent to Cabinet Members, of which 20 required a written response. The average time taken to respond was 22 days, with 55% responded to within the 21 days target.
- 3.2 The following letter(s) from previous Scrutiny meetings, not already reported back to the Committee, are **attached** for discussion, as necessary:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Public Engagement Scrutiny Working Group	5 February 2025	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy (Leader)

3.3 Public Engagement Working Group

3.3.1 In order to assist future Committee follow up, which will be planned for around 9-12 months' time, a summary is provided below:

3.3.2 The Public Engagement Scrutiny Working Group, convened by Councillor Lyndon Jones, met on the 5 February 2025 for a focussed discussion and questioning around the Council's role and responsibilities on 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. Cllr Rob Stewart, Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance and Strategy (Leader) and Lee Wenham, Head of Communications, Corporate Planning and Performance and Amy Richmond-Jones from Mid and West Wales Fire Service attended to assist the Working Group.

3.3.3 The Working Group received an update of the Council's current work in this area which included the increase in social media, recent Audit Wales reports, feeding back, plans for 2025 and working with other departments. The Working Group asked several questions on hearing the views of young people, social media, online surveys, increasing response rates and gathering in person responses. It also heard how the Mid and West Wales Fire Service engage with the public.

3.3.4 Overall:

- The Working Group was pleased that there will be a focus this year on consulting with underrepresented groups.
- It requested to see the results of the Data Cymru Wales-wide survey, referred to.
- It made a number of recommendations, including:
 - using pupil forums as a way of gathering views of young people;
 - reducing the preamble in surveys;
 - the reintroduction of focus groups; and
 - the use of Councillor networks to advertise surveys.

3.3.5 The Cabinet Member responded to the recommendations and conclusions made by the Working Group, with several actions being taken. When the Committee arranges the follow up meeting it will need to check progress on these as well as wider developments in public engagement, including:

- Whether the results of the Data Cymru survey have been shared
- Improvements that have been made in the design of surveys
- Developments in relation to the plan to focus on targeting underrepresented groups in the coming year
- Efforts to promote surveys to increase awareness, through Councillors or otherwise, e.g. social media, community notices
- Examples of focus groups and pupil forums being used as part of Council consultation processes

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Letters Log – 2024-25

Appendix 2: Scrutiny Letters / Responses