

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 8 February 2016

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Purpose	This report reviews the current scrutiny work programme.
Content	The current work programme is described, including the plan for future committee meetings, and progress of panels and working groups.
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• accept or make changes to the scrutiny work programme• plan for the committee meetings ahead• review progress of established panels and working groups• consider opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny
Lead Councillor	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair
Lead Officer	Dean Taylor, Director – Corporate Services
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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 The work of scrutiny aims to:

- help improve services
- provide an effective challenge to the executive
- engage members in the development of policies, strategies and plans
- engage the public

1.3 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 scrutiny time and resources.

It also needs to be:

- manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available
- relevant to council priorities
- adding value and having maximum impact
- coordinated and avoid duplication

- 1.4 The work of scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the committee itself, by establishing informal panels or via one-off working groups.
- 1.5 Scrutiny will regularly send letters to Cabinet Members communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement and, where appropriate, by producing reports. Inquiry panels will 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.
- 1.6 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 scrutiny activities are published on-line: <http://swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications>.

2. Scrutiny Work Programme

2.1 Scrutiny Programme Committee:

- 2.1.1 The committee's work plan for the year ahead is attached as **Appendix 1**. This includes a schedule of future Cabinet Member Question & Answer Sessions. This should be kept under review to ensure it represents a robust and effective plan.
- 2.1.2 Committee members should review and confirm items for the next and future meetings giving specific consideration to who should attend so that meetings are always well planned and prepared for, e.g. information required and key questions that the committee wishes to ask. The committee will have the opportunity to review priorities and introduce issues of concern as and when they arise, e.g. pre-decision scrutiny which may require extra meetings.
- 2.1.3 Pre-decision scrutiny – the committee is invited to consider the available information on future cabinet business (see Forward Look attached as **Appendix 2**) and any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny, taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications. 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.

2.1.4 Committee Review - the review of the Gypsy & Traveller Site Search Process (commenced in February 2014) has been carried out via special meetings of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. Evidence gathering has now been completed and a final report has been prepared to conclude this review. A special meeting is taking place on 4 February to agree the final report.

2.2 Panels and Working Groups:

2.2.1 **Appendix 3a & 3b** provide a snapshot of progress with the informal panels and working groups established by the committee to carry out specific activities and their current position.

2.2.2 For further information a contact list for lead scrutiny members and officers is also contained in **Appendix 4**.

2.2.3 Public Transport

At a recent meeting it was agreed that further work in relation to the scrutiny of public transport was necessary. Reference was made to the previous Scrutiny Inquiry on Public Transport completed in 2013 and outstanding actions. As the monitoring of this Inquiry was completed in 2014 it is proposed that either:

- a) questions be put to the Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport when he appears before the committee on 9 May 2016.
- b) a Working Group is held to deal with any current issues that are causing concern. If this is preferred the committee is asked to confirm the focus of this work so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

(Background to previous scrutiny: the Public Transport Inquiry, convened by Cllr John Newbury, focused on how we can ensure that public transport improves social inclusion. The inquiry was followed up by the Inquiry Panel in October 2014. This represented the conclusion of monitoring of recommendations and a letter was sent to the relevant Cabinet Member. Overall the Panel was pleased that the majority of recommendations had been completed and were satisfied that the work of the Panel can be concluded. However the letter did highlight outstanding issues for the Cabinet Member's attention in relation to: disability training for bus drivers; First Cymru's Customer Panel; publicity for the 'Better and Safer Journeys' initiative; new technology and travel information; promotion of community bus services; and the condition of bus shelters. Most significantly there was concern about a decision not to progress work to develop a Quality Bus Contract. The Cabinet Member provided a written response in February 2015, taking on board the issues raised)

3. Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action

- 3.1 A request for scrutiny was received from Councillor Chris Holley, on behalf of the Independent, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups. There is concern about aspects of the current planning committee system, which has been in place since January 2015, calling for this matter to be included in the scrutiny work programme.
- 3.2 Taking into account relevant advice, it is proposed to request that the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration, Cllr Robert Francis-Davies, provide a report to the committee on the current planning system with information on performance and effectiveness. This will enable questions from the committee and for the Cabinet Member to hear and take on board specific concerns.
- 3.3 Councillor Francis-Davies is already scheduled to attend the committee on 11 April for a question and answer session therefore it will be opportune to ask for a report on planning at that meeting.
- 3.4 The committee is asked to accept this proposal.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 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.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

Background papers: None

Legal Officer: Wendy Parkin

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Committee Work Plan 2015/16

Appendix 2: Forward Look (Cabinet Business)

Appendix 3a: Overall Scrutiny Work Programme Timetable 2015/16

Appendix 3b: Progress of Panels and Working Groups

Appendix 4: Scrutiny Councillor / Officer Leads