

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 12 September 2016

CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION

Purpose	To enable the committee to question Cabinet Members on their work. The committee's questions will broadly explore priorities, actions, achievements and impact in relation to areas of responsibility.
Content	The following Cabinet Member will appear before the committee to participate in a question and answer session: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councillor Will Evans – Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty and Communities
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Question the Cabinet Member on relevant matters• Make comments and recommendations as necessary
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer(s)	Mike Hawes, Corporate Director Services (Resources)
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of the most important roles that scrutiny carries out is holding the council's cabinet to account. The cabinet is made up of the Leader and 9 additional councillors, appointed by the Leader, who are allocated specific responsibilities.
- 1.2 By acting as a 'critical friend' scrutiny has the opportunity to challenge the cabinet and individual cabinet members on their actions and monitor performance in relation to their areas of responsibilities.
- 1.3 Cabinet Member Question Sessions have become a feature of committee meetings over the past 4 years. At least one cabinet member is scheduled to appear at each committee meeting, ensuring all 10 Cabinet Members appear before the committee over the course of a year, in order to ask questions on their work. Questions will focus on their priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

2. Cabinet Member Question Session

2.1 The following Cabinet Member will appear before the committee:

- a) Councillor Will Evans – Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty and Communities

Within this Cabinet portfolio, he is responsible for:

- Communities First
- Community Cohesion
- Community Development
- Digital Inclusion
- Financial Information
- Food Access / Growing (link with Wellbeing & Healthy City)
- Homelessness
- Localised Services
- Neighbourhood Working
- Poverty Strategy
- Social Inclusion
- Third (3rd) Sector
- Welfare Reform
- Welfare Rights

2.2 The Cabinet Member has provided some ‘headlines’ in relation to the portfolio to help the committee focus on priorities, actions, achievements and impact (see **Appendix 1**).

3. Approach to Questions

3.1 At the Cabinet Member Question Sessions the committee will generally ask cabinet members about:

- priorities / objectives
- specific activities and achievements, progress against policy commitments, key decisions taken, and impact / difference made
- headlines on the performance of services and the key targets monitored to measure improvement and success
- their engagement with service users / public and what influence this has had
- what they hope to achieve over the next 12 months and challenges (e.g. resources / budget)
- key decisions they are expecting to take to Cabinet over the next year
- interactions with scrutiny over the last year, and whether there is any specific scrutiny activity they would welcome

- 3.2 The committee has also identified sustainability and future trends as a key cross-cutting theme. It is interested in to what extent long-term thinking is influencing work / decisions. The committee is also interested in the relationship between the work of the Public Services Board (PSB) and Cabinet Members, and could ask about how the work of the PSB impacts on their portfolio and is helping them to deliver on priorities, and making a difference.
- 3.3 Cabinet Members will be invited to make introductory remarks before taking questions from the committee. Following the session the chair will write to the Cabinet Member in order to capture the main issues discussed, views expressed by the committee, and any actions for the Cabinet Member to consider.
- 3.4 If the committee wishes to conduct more detailed scrutiny of any of the issues raised during this item then this should be agreed through the normal work planning process and planned for a future meeting. This will also allow proper time for preparation.

4. Previous Correspondence

- 4.1 The committee last had a Q & A regarding this portfolio in January 2016. Amongst the issues discussed then included:

- Tackling Poverty
- Food & Growing
- Homelessness
- Community Action

The actual correspondence relating to this meeting is attached as the committee may wish to follow up on these issues, as necessary.

- 4.2 Other relevant contact with scrutiny:

- The Tackling Poverty Inquiry has commenced with the evidence gather sessions starting in September. The Cabinet Member attended a pre-inquiry briefing with the Panel in April 2016. The Panel met in June to agree the lines of inquiry and wrote to the Cabinet Member to confirm that the inquiry is going ahead.
- The Service Improvement & Finance Panel wrote to the Cabinet Member in May following its consideration of the 3rd Quarter Performance Monitoring report. The Panel felt that the number of indicators within the report was limited for the Tackling Poverty Corporate Priority (with only two being reported) and wanted to understand the full range of performance information that is collected in relation to this priority. The Cabinet Member provided the Panel with the further information requested. The Panel copied the letter and the response to the Convener of the Tackling Poverty Inquiry so that she was aware of the issues raised.

5. Other Questions

- 5.1 For each Cabinet Member Q & A Session the committee invites members of the public and other scrutiny councillors (not on the committee) to suggest questions.
- 5.2 On this occasion no questions were received.

6. Legal Implications

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

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Background Papers: None

Legal Officer: Wendy Parkin

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley