

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 10 October 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 Robert Francis-Davies – Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration |
| 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) |
| Report Author | Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Coordinator Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk |

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 Robert Francis-Davies – Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration

Within this Cabinet portfolio, he is responsible for:

- Adult Learning / Workways
- City Centre (link with Wellbeing & Healthy City)
- City of Culture
- City Deal (link with Next Generation Services)
- City Region
- Culture: Arts (link with Wellbeing & Healthy City)
- Creative City
- Economic Development & Investment
- Heritage
- Licensing
- Planning Policy / Local Development Plan (LDP)
- Science City
- Suburban Centres
- Support for NEETS
- Tourism & Destination Marketing (link with Wellbeing & Healthy City)
- Universities

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, in light of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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 April 2016. Amongst the issues discussed then included:

- Planning
- Cultural Services
- Regeneration Projects
- Tourism / Special Events
- Licensing

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

- 4.2 The committee also undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet report on 'Castle Square – Development and Public Realm Opportunity' in June. A further Cabinet report is scheduled for Cabinet in October, and as requested by the committee it will also be subject to pre-decision scrutiny. A special committee meeting is being arranged for 17 October for this purpose.

- 4.2 Other relevant contact with scrutiny:

- Tree Preservation Working Group – the Working Group (convened by Councillor David Cole) wrote to the Cabinet Member in May with its views and recommendations. The Cabinet Member responded in June. The Working Group discussed the council's responsibility for preserving trees and the environmental benefits of urban trees and highlighted the importance of an effective tree preservation service.

Its main concern was about trees not being replaced. Recommendations included: publicising prosecutions for breaching tree preservation orders; the Park Service setting up their own tree nursery; and Council's departments replanting trees that are removed during the course of their work. The Cabinet Member has been asked to provide an update to the committee on actions carried out following this piece of scrutiny.

- Planning Working Group – the Cabinet Member will be attending a meeting on 19 October. This will enable questions to be put in relation to the current planning system, including Section 106 agreements, and the call-in process.

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 The following questions were submitted to the committee by Councillor Mike Day:

a) Support for NEETs - Can the Cabinet Member update the committee on the current performance and the measures that are in place to ensure that young people are given life chances that might be denied them if they are NEET? What assurances can he give that the Council will continue to allocate resources to ensure the figures move down further?

b) Enterprise Education - Swansea has been recognised as a leader in the field of enterprise education and the encouragement to young people to set up businesses. How important does he believe it is to have effective actions to promote enterprise education and support new businesses, especially those set up by young people? What actions is the Council currently taking to ensure enterprise education is supported and what assurances can he give that every effort will be made to ensure resources continue at the current level at least for the next 5 years, if not increased? What applications for funding will the Council be making to support its actions in enterprise education and business start ups?

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: Tracey Meredith

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley