

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
MONDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2016 AT 4.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

A C S Colburn
E W Fitzgerald
E J King

Councillor(s)

S E Crouch
T J Hennegan
G Owens

Councillor(s)

N J Davies
J W Jones
G J Tanner

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

C A Holley

Also Present: -

Councillor R Francis-Davies

Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development &
Regeneration

Councillor D W Cole

Convener – Tree Preservation Working Group

Mr A M Thomas

Chair of Audit Committee

Officer(s)

Brij Madahar
Wendy Parkin
Jeff Saywell
Jeremy Parkhouse

Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Senior Lawyer
Landscape Team Leader
Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): C Anderson, U C Clay, C R Evans, F M Gordon, P R Hood-Williams
and P M Meara

72 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL & PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of
Swansea, no interests were declared.

73 **PROHIBITION OF WHIPPED VOTES AND DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPS.**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of
Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

74 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committee held on 12
September 2016 be approved as a correct record.

75 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME.**

There were no public questions.

76 **CABINET MEMBER QUESTION SESSION: CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE, DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION (COUNCILLOR ROBERT FRANCIS-DAVIES).**

Councillor R Francis-Davies provided a short opening address on his Cabinet Portfolio prior to taking questions from the Committee which focussed on the following:

- City Centre
- Civic Centre
- City Region / City Deal
- Suburban Centres
- Culture (Arts)
- Support for NEETS
- Enterprise Education
- Universities
- European and External Funding
- Tree Preservation
- Planning

The session included a follow up on the work of the Tree Preservation Scrutiny Working Group, which had made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet Member. A written progress report was provided to the Committee by the Cabinet Member. Councillor D W Cole, Convener of the Working Group, was present to comment and ask questions. Councillor Cole was pleased with and encouraged by the progress that has been made, and praised the efforts of the Council's Landscape Team. The Committee welcomed the development of a Tree Policy, which would amongst other things cover the replanting of trees on Council land.

Councillor Francis-Davies welcomed this piece of scrutiny and assured the committee that the findings had been considered fully. The Committee noted that some recommendations were still in progress and amongst these the Cabinet Member confirmed that the implications of placing Tree Preservation Orders on Council land prior to sale was being discussed. There was concern amongst Councillors that many trees had been lost through sale of Council land because of the failure to protect trees.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for his comments and observations.

RESOLVED that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee writes to the Cabinet Member, reflecting the discussion and sharing the views of the Committee.

77 **ANNUAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE BULLETIN 2015-16.**

The Chair provided the national performance report, published by the Local Government Data Unit Wales, which would be useful in supporting and informing the work of scrutiny in Swansea.

She referred to the performance of the Authority in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants, which would continue to be monitored by the Service Improvement and Finance Panel.

78 **AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORT (CHAIR OF AUDIT COMMITTEE, ALAN THOMAS).**

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Mr Alan Thomas presented the Audit Committee Work Plan and Annual Report and had attended in support of developing the relationship between scrutiny and the Audit Committee and coordination between respective work plans.

It was outlined that the purpose of the discussion was to ensure mutual awareness, avoiding duplication and ensuring that gaps did not appear in the respective work plans.

He highlighted that the Audit Committee looked at gaining assurance regarding the financial affairs of the Council, particularly risk management, internal control, overall corporate governance arrangements and financial statements. In addition, the Audit Committee also monitored the internal and external audit arrangements of the Council.

He cited examples where the work of the Audit Committee and Scrutiny had been complementary, with issues around school governance, and planning matters being investigated and examined. Mr Thomas was clear about respective roles and commented on the scrutiny function to look at issues in detail.

He referred to the recent health check undertaken by the Wales Audit Office and a previous presentation they provided that outlined the role of the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee had received very positive feedback from the Wales Audit Office regarding the work it had undertaken to improve services but it was recognised that there were still many areas that required improving. The Committee compared very favourably with other Audit Committees across Wales.

The Audit Committee would be examining the number of partnerships and collaborations locally, particularly their effective governance, outputs and value for money.

The Committee asked questions of the Chair of the Audit Committee, who responded accordingly. Discussions centred around the following: -

- Good governance practices in schools;
- School audits, reserves held by schools in Swansea, the work of challenge advisors, the forthcoming review of issues with the Chief Education Officer;

- Powers available to local authorities with regard to schools with high levels of reserves;
- Input of the Wales Audit Office into the work of the Audit Committee and the positive relationship currently being fostered.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) The Wales Audit Office presentation regarding the role of the Audit Committee be circulated to the Committee.

79 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17.**

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Work Programme 2016/17.

The report provided the Committee with:

- The current Scrutiny Work Programme;
- A plan for future committee meetings;
- A progress report on the various existing Panels and Working Groups; and
- Cabinet forward plan for opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny.

She referred to the Highways & Transportation and Parks and Cleansing Commissioning Reviews expected in December 2016 which would be subject to pre-decision scrutiny.

It was added that meeting arrangements were being made for the new HMO Scrutiny Working Group and details would be circulated in due course.

Councillor Chris Holley, Convener of the Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel expressed disappointment that his Panel had not discussed a report requested on Fees and Charges that has been originally scheduled for June 2016. The Chair proposed that a letter be forwarded to the Leader / Chief Executive on the Panel's behalf to highlight this issue and the Panel's concern.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator informed the Committee that Mrs Beverley Phillips, Head Teacher of Blaenymaes Primary School had been co-opted to the Tackling Poverty Panel.

RESOLVED that: -

- 1) The contents of the report be noted;
- 2) Letters be forwarded to the Leader / Chief Executive as outlined above.

80 **MEMBERSHIP OF SCRUTINY PANELS AND WORKING GROUPS.**

The Chair presented a report outlining proposed revisions to the Scrutiny Panel / Working Group membership.

A revision to the current scrutiny panel/s working group membership was outlined in respect of:

- Tackling Poverty Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – Councillor A J Jones to be deleted.

The membership of the new Scrutiny Working Group to look at Houses in Multiple Occupation, following expressions of interest, was reported as follows:

Labour Councillors: 5

S E Crouch	H M Morris
N Davies	T J Hennegan
T M White	

Liberal Democrat Councillors: 3

Mary Jones (Convener)	L G Thomas
T H Rees	

Independent Councillors: 3

D W Cole	K E Marsh
E W Fitzgerald	

Conservative Councillor: 1

A C S Colburn	
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Non-Aligned Councillor: 1

P N May	
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RESOLVED that the above be endorsed.

81 **SCRUTINY LETTERS.**

The Chair reported the Scrutiny Letters Log.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Letters Log be **NOTED**.

82 **FEEDBACK FROM RECENT SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

There had been no recent Scrutiny events.

83 **UPCOMING SCRUTINY EVENTS.**

There were no upcoming Scrutiny events.

84 **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2016/17 MUNICIPAL YEAR (ALL AT 4.30 PM).**

The dates and times of future Committee meetings for the 2016-2017 Municipal Year were **NOTED**.

The Chair informed the Committee that the Special Committee scheduled for 17 October 2016 had been cancelled due to the report on Castle Square, which was due to be the subject of pre-decision scrutiny, being withdrawn from Cabinet on 20 October 2016.

85 **DATE AND TIME OF UPCOMING PANEL / WORKING GROUP MEETINGS.**

The date and times of upcoming Panel / Work Group meetings were provided 'for information'.

The meeting ended at 5.58 pm

CHAIR