

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 10 April 2017

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 year and provides a copy of correspondence between scrutiny and cabinet members, where discussion is 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(s)	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer(s)	Mike Hawes, Director – Resources
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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 Programme Committee or conveners of panels / working groups, are published on the Council's website (<http://swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications>) 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 where specific discussion is required. Letters are included where cabinet member responses were awaited and have now been received or where a scrutiny letter did not require a response.

2.3 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. The exception to this is the Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel, whose letters will also be reported as this committee is the designated committee for scrutinising Swansea Public Services Board (for the purposes of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015). However all Performance Panel conveners will provide a quarterly progress report to the committee, including summary of correspondence with Cabinet Members and outcomes. Note - the letters relating to the Public Services Board Scrutiny Panel are included in this agenda under item 7 as part of the routine progress report being provided by the convener.

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 last year – see **Appendix 1**.

3.2 The following letter(s) are also attached for discussion:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Group	12 Jan	Letter to / from Cabinet Members for Wellbeing & Health City and Environment, Development & Regeneration
b	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	13 Feb	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services
c	Local Flood Risk Management Working Group	1 Mar	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation
d	Digital Inclusion Working Group	6 Mar	Letter to Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty & Communities
e	Committee (pre-decision scrutiny)	13 Mar	Letter to Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration
f	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	13 Mar	Letter to Cabinet Member for Transformation & Performance

3.3 Some points to note:

- HMO Working Group - Having heard from Cabinet Members, officers and members of the public the HMO Working Group made a number of recommendations. The Group called for clear controls over the density and spread of HMOs across the City and County of Swansea, most notably in Uplands and St Thomas given the proximity to university campuses. They also called for more resources to be directed to HMO enforcement activities. The response of the relevant Cabinet Members is attached. This work is now concluded.
- Local Flood Risk Management Working Group – the annual scrutiny meeting to look at progress with the local flood risk plan took place on 1 March, and the Group made a number of recommendations in relation to underground watercourses, the prioritised programme of works, and public information about flood risk.
- Digital Inclusion Working Group – the Group has provided views to the relevant Cabinet Member(s) on the Council’s Digital Inclusion Strategy, which is going to be reviewed shortly. The Working Group is keen that this issue is revisited by scrutiny after the election perhaps as a further working group, or at the very least raised at the relevant Cabinet Member Question and Answer Sessions.

3.4 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 as a result of the views and recommendations made. 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.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications.

Background Papers: None

Legal Officer: Wendy Parkin

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley