



## Report of the Chair

### Scrutiny Programme Committee – 13 November 2017

## Scrutiny Letters

<b>Purpose:</b>	To ensure the committee is aware of the scrutiny letters produced following various scrutiny activities, and to track responses to date.
<b>Content:</b>	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.
<b>Councillors are being asked to:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the scrutiny letters and responses</li><li>• Make comments, observations and recommendations as necessary</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor:</b>	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Tracey Meredith, Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Business Intelligence
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<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Stephanie Williams
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	Amanda Thomas

### 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 Scrutiny Programme Committee or conveners of panels / working groups, are published 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, e.g. letters relating to the Committee, Working Groups, and Inquiry Panel follow ups. Letters are included when cabinet member responses that were awaited are received or where a scrutiny letter did not require a response.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 progress report to the committee, including summary of correspondence with Cabinet Members and outcomes.

## 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 year – see **Appendix 1**. The letters log also shows the average time taken by Cabinet Members to respond to scrutiny letters, and the percentage of letters responded to within timescale.
- 3.2 The following letter(s) are also attached for discussion see **Appendix 2**:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	11 Sep	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Service Transformation & Business Operations (Deputy Leader)
b	School Governance Inquiry Follow Up	25 Sep	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning

- 3.3 The School Governance Inquiry Panel considered progress against agreed recommendations and impact of its work, and agreed to conclude monitoring of the inquiry.
- 3.3.1 The inquiry was credited with prompting reflection on the support and training provided to school governors, and highlighting the need for closer working between governing bodies and school challenge advisors.
- 3.3.2 The Panel felt that good progress has been made with many of the recommendations but highlighted the need for better signposting of information to governors. The Panel were also pleased to hear that Challenge Advisors are now attending governing bodies in the Autumn Term for schools that are identified as Red or Amber.
- 3.3.3 The Panel wrote to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning with its view on how things have changed and outstanding issues that need attention. Any further issues relating to School Governance will be followed up via the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel.

#### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1:** Scrutiny Letters Log

**Appendix 2:** Correspondence between scrutiny and cabinet members