



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 11 December 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:	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer:	Tracey Meredith, Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Business Intelligence
Report Author:	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Coordinator Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer:	Stephanie Williams
Finance Officer:	Paul Cridland

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)	9 Oct	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning
b	Emergency Planning & Resilience Working Group	11 Oct	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Service Transformation & Business Operations (Deputy Leader)

c	Committee (Castle Square Pre-Decision)	17 Oct	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Major Projects
d	Building Sustainable Communities Inquiry Follow Up	17 Oct	Letter to Cabinet Member for Future Generations
e	Committee (More Homes Pilot Scheme Pre-Decision)	13 Nov	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Housing, Energy & Building Services
f	Community Cohesion & Hate Crime Working Group	14 Nov	Letter to Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities
g	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services Inquiry Follow Up	15 Nov	Letter to Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing

3.3 Key Points:

3.3.1 Emergency Planning & Resilience Working Group - The Working Group on 11 October looked at the Council's Emergency Management Service. It enabled questions about arrangements and resources that are in place, the level of preparedness for emergencies, and challenges to the service. Amongst recommendations made, the Working Group has asked for consideration to be given to establishing a formal Council Committee to support emergency planning. Scrutiny Councillors were also concerned whether there was enough communication and information with local councillors to improve preparation and response, and have asked for this to be addressed. The Cabinet Member's response confirms action that will be taken against each of the scrutiny recommendations, including the establishment of a Members Emergency Planning Forum.

3.3.2 Building Sustainable Communities Inquiry Follow Up - The Building Sustainable Communities Inquiry Panel considered progress against agreed recommendations and impact of its work. This work focussed on the authority's efforts to develop and promote community action, which was one of the Council's priorities around Building Sustainable Communities. The Panel heard that there was now a stronger focus on supporting volunteer participation in relation to community buildings and open spaces, with a range of guidance materials available. The Panel was pleased with the delivery of actions against scrutiny recommendations, including action on improving communication with community groups and establishing an annual celebration of community work. The monitoring on the inquiry is now complete.

3.3.3 Community Cohesion & Hate Crime Working Group -

This Working Group enabled information and discussion / questions about the council's work to support and promote community cohesion and tackle issues and effectiveness, and consider the current situation. The Working Group is asking the committee to agree for a further Working Group meeting to be held in six months (around May 2018) to focus on Community Cohesion, as they are concerned about the lack of an overarching direction, or strategy, for this aspect. Working Group members also felt that this issue could be a possible future scrutiny inquiry topic or something which could be picked up by the relevant Policy Development and Delivery Committee to develop.

3.3.4 Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services Inquiry Follow Up -

The Inquiry into Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services was also followed up. Whilst hearing about some improvements, the Panel agreed that a further follow up meeting was necessary in view of overall progress with the implementation of agreed recommendations. This will take place in around nine to twelve months.

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