

Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel Update

1. Remit of the Panel

The overarching purpose of the Panel is to ensure that the Council's budget, corporate and service improvement arrangements are effective and efficient.

2. Introduction

The Panel is focused on contributing to the budget process and annual improvement process by providing a critical friend for the Cabinet, and helping to ensure accountability.

3. Key Activities

The Panel held five meetings between August and November 2017. This involved a Commissioning Review on Public Protection and presentations from a range of officers about performance, improvement and budget monitoring. This has resulted in four convener's letters being sent to Cabinet Members. The main issues covered were as follows:

2 nd August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Panel and Work Plan
6 th September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of Year Performance Monitoring Report • Corporate Plan 17/22 • Capital Outturn and Financing 16/17 • Q1 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring
4 th October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Language Standards 16/17 • Q1 Performance Monitoring Report • Local Government Performance Bulletin 16/17
16 th October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Protection Commissioning Review
1 st November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycling and Landfill Annual Performance Monitoring • Mid- Year Budget Statement • Reserves Update

4. Achievements / Impact

Pre-decision scrutiny of Commissioning Reviews

The Panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny on the Public Protection Commissioning review in October 2017 and made the following recommendations:

- 1. Increased public engagement about the services on offer. The good work of Swansea Council should be celebrated.*
- 2. The service offers excellent value for money given the breadth of the services on offer. We felt that this type of value for money service should be advertised as a success.*
- 3. In relation to customer demand, feedback and complaints information, the Panel felt that further work will be undertaken to capture qualitative data using IT solutions as the IT cannot be relied upon.*
- 4. Comparing Swansea's services to other Councils is not the best way of analysing performance.*
- 5. Current commercial opportunities are unlikely to be successful to the point where they make a significant difference.*
- 6. It is not sensible to divert attention away from the statutory frontline services to pursue commercial opportunities.*

In addition, the Convener has recently written to the Leader to express frustration about the limited time to consider Commissioning Review documents and give views. The Panel feels they should have earlier access to read and digest such large and important documents.

Budget and performance monitoring

The Panel regularly receives quarterly and annual performance and budget reports. This enables it to maintain a good level of understanding of performance and budgetary issues. It is closely monitoring a number of key issues and has suggested areas for improvement in monitoring and reporting of information including:

Reserves: The Panel are closely monitoring the Council's reserves and what they are allocated against.

Mid-Year Budget Statement and Q2 Budget Monitoring: Should the timing be changed so that these reports come to the Service Improvement and Finance Panel before being reported to Council.

Performance Monitoring: The Panel are closely monitoring all areas but have made recommendations specifically around staff training, public perceptions of the Council and Social Services.

5. Future Work Programme

The Panel will be considering the following items between December and the end of the municipal year in April 2018 (not including Budget Monitoring and Performance Monitoring):

- Highways and Transportation Commissioning Review
- Corporate Complaints Annual Report
- Perception Survey Report
- Budget Scrutiny
- Library Standards Annual Report
- Charges – Highways and Waste

6. Action required by the Scrutiny Programme Committee

None.