



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 14 May 2018

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
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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 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:

	Activity	Meeting Date	Correspondence
a	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	12 Feb	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Environment Services
b	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	12 Feb	Letter from Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities (in response to further information requested)

c	Local Flood Risk Management Working Group	20 Feb	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Environment Services
d	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	12 Mar	Letter to Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism & Major Projects
e	Readiness for School Inquiry Follow Up	27 Mar	Letter to Cabinet Members for Children, Education & Lifelong Learning, and Health & Well-being
f	Committee (Cabinet Member Q & A)	9 Apr	Letter to Cabinet Members for Future Generations

3.3 Points to highlight:

3.3.1 Stronger Communities Q & A Session – The Cabinet Member has provided a further response as the Committee wanted more information on what performance measures and monitoring arrangements were in place to measure outcomes in relation to the Communities First Legacy Fund and ensure that good value for money was being achieved.

3.3.2 Local Flood Risk Management Working Group – the convener of the Working Group, Councillor Peter Jones, will be invited to address the Committee on the views of the Working Group on the Authority's Local Flood Risk Management Plan. This issue is looked at annually and the Working Group met on 20 February. As a result of concerns / issues raised with the Cabinet Member for Environment Services, action will include the following:

- A prioritised programme of works will be made available to the public on request on the understanding that prioritisation may change and the delivery of the proposed actions depends on funding availability.
- Emergency Management website has been completed which will incorporate the Flood Risk Leaflet and other useful information relating to flooding advice and links to key stakeholders e.g. Natural Resources Wales.
- Paper copies of the leaflet will be disseminated in public places
- In terms of the ongoing studies on flood risk, once they have been completed this information will be shared with ward members and any residents who have been affected by flooding.
- Highways maintenance schedule of watercourses will be forwarded to local members, to comment on whether there are any additional concerns which may exist outside of the committed programme.

The Committee should note the Working Group's request that it next meets in six months' time to consider progress. The Cabinet Member agrees that this would be beneficial. If the Working Group envisages this to be an additional meeting then the Committee should note that this will take priority over any new Working Group topic around October 2018.

3.3.3 Readiness for School Inquiry Follow Up – the convener of the Panel, Councillor Hazel Morris, will be invited to address the Committee on the monitoring of this previous inquiry. A decision on the inquiry recommendations was made by Cabinet in June 2017. The Panel met in March 2018 to consider progress against agreed recommendations and assess the impact of its work. Councillors were pleased to hear that their work has made an impact in many areas and that substantial progress had been made, with changes at operational and strategic levels. The Panel agreed that its monitoring of the inquiry was complete however a number of outstanding issues, mainly longer terms actions, would be referred to the Schools Performance Panel to keep an eye on over the next year.

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