



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 9 July 2018

Scrutiny Improvement & Development Objectives

Purpose:	To consider objectives for the year ahead on the improvement and development of scrutiny process and practice.
Content:	A number of improvement objectives have been identified following reflection and self-evaluation activities for agreement.
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• agree Scrutiny Improvement Objectives• discuss possible actions that will support delivery of objectives• confirm what needs to be done to support scrutiny councillor training & development
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is good practice for those involved in the scrutiny function to undertake regular self-evaluation of this work. Taking into account characteristics of effective scrutiny and experiences it is important for the continuous improvement of the function that any issues identified about current scrutiny practice are discussed and addressed.
- 1.2 Opportunities for those involved or interested in scrutiny to feedback views are provided each year through surveys, as well as through annual review discussions within the Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Performance Panels.

- 1.3 Having completed a year of the new Council term it is a good time for the Committee to reflect on practice and identify improvement objectives for scrutiny.

2. Developing Scrutiny Improvement Objectives

- 2.1 On 3 May a workshop for Committee Members was held to review the results of the annual councillor scrutiny survey, consider findings, and think about actions that should follow to improve scrutiny. At the Committee meeting on 14 May councillors also reflected generally on their experiences.
- 2.2 Taking account of issues emerging from the survey and other views expressed, consideration has been given to what should be done about improving scrutiny, identifying what appear to be the most important and pressing issues relating to scrutiny practice / process.
- 2.3 The Committee should note that previous improvement objectives (identified in 2015) have focussed on:
- improving communication with cabinet members
 - better alignment of scrutiny work with corporate priorities
 - the need for more briefings and development sessions to improve knowledge and skills
 - getting more coverage in the media to raise awareness of scrutiny
 - getting more public engagement in scrutiny meetings
 - developing closer links with regulators and inspectors

3. Draft Improvement Objectives

- 3.1 This process of reflection and self-evaluation has helped to guide improvement actions for scrutiny in Swansea for the coming year. The following draft improvement objectives have emerged from this process:
- 1) We need more of our work to be reported to Cabinet so that there is more formal consideration of scrutiny conclusions and recommendations.
 - 2) We need to be involved at an earlier stage in proposed Cabinet decisions so that our input can be more meaningful.
 - 3) We need to increase opportunities for participation so that more councillors can get involved in the work of scrutiny.
 - 4) We need to strengthen follow up of all scrutiny recommendations so that the response and difference made can be assessed.
 - 5) We need more coverage in the media so that people are more aware of our work.

- 3.2 Whilst there will be other areas for improvement these objectives should to reflect the issues that matter most to scrutiny councillors and are therefore priorities.
- 3.3 Subject to the Committee's agreement of these objectives each will need to be supported by specific actions to deliver the improvement sought. Whilst the objectives themselves will act as drivers for improvement a further report will be made to the Committee to identify meaningful (but by no means exhaustive) actions that will have the most impact. Some may be 'easy wins' and some may need more thought and/or will have dependency on others and require any practical implications or issues to be worked through.
- 3.4 Committee members are invited to share any ideas they may have about possible actions.
- 3.5 The Committee should note that any agreed objectives will need to be reviewed, and if necessary revised, when the findings of the Wales Audit Office Review of Scrutiny, which took place earlier this year, are received.

4. Councillor Training & Development Needs

- 4.1 The annual councillor scrutiny survey invited members to identify any training & development needs. The results of the survey indicate that the vast majority are 'ok at the moment' but would like to receive information on any future opportunities. Only four out of 45 scrutiny councillors expressed a need, which suggests the following:
- Conveners, who may not have chaired meetings before, getting 1-2-1 training / coaching.
 - Ad hoc information briefings being offered to members about relevant department / service / structures / statutory requirements in order to provide background / foundation for their scrutiny.
 - Regular activities around the scrutiny process including learning more about ways to increase public participation.
- 4.2 The Welsh Local Government Association (in conjunction with the Centre for Public Scrutiny in Wales) will in the near future be announcing their training and development offer on the scrutiny function / members to Councils. This may provide a solution for an already identified need for some form of 'chairing scrutiny' training. Questioning skills is another area which has been of interest – addressed in part at the Scrutiny Induction Sessions in June 2017. The WLGA 'offer' will help inform / support our plans, though there will be a cost to anything they provide that will need to be considered when known.
- 4.3 Scrutiny specific plans / proposed activities may need to be integrated within the overall Council Training & Development Programme, which is agreed annually by Council.

4.4 The Committee is asked to confirm any specific expectations / requirements in relation to scrutiny specific training and development activities.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None