



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 13 August 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	Homelessness Working Group	12 Jun	Letter to / from Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy

3.3 Points to highlight:

3.3.1 Homelessness Working Group – the convener of the Working Group, Councillor Peter Black, will be invited to address the Committee on the views of the Working Group on what the Council can do to help homelessness in Swansea and in particular the Council's activities to manage homelessness, the current position, performance of relevant services, and challenges. As a result of concerns/issues raised with the Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy, action will include the following:

- Council recognises that in terms of specialist accommodation, a more innovative approach is needed for entrenched rough sleepers and is developing a Housing First project which should be implemented towards the end of 2018/19.
- Council has recognised that couples can be limited in accessing certain types of accommodation and the Housing First project will address this. The Council is also working with the voluntary sector to extend the number of emergency bed places for couples who are sleeping rough
- The chair of the Move-On Panel has spoken directly with Caerlas to listen to their concerns about the long waiting lists for access to Move-On panel and an action in the Homelessness Strategy will be to review the Move-On Strategy.
- Council is looking at providing information to businesses so they know how to direct people to help. A Homelessness Charter will be produced as part of the Homelessness Strategy which will focus on trying to ensure engagement from service users, the general public, businesses and the community as a whole.
- An action in the Homelessness Strategy will be to improve engagement between agencies working with homeless people and Mental Health Services in primary care and secondary mental health services. This is as a result of the review of homelessness which identified mental health as a significant care and support needs amongst homeless people.
- Another action in the Homelessness Strategy will be to engage with the Substance Misuse Area Planning Board to focus on individuals with alcohol or drug dependency who challenge the existing model of provision.
- Council confirmed it is in the early stages of developing proposals for a multi-agency solutions centre and this will be an action within the Homelessness Strategy. All relevant agencies will be involved in the development of this to ensure a collaborative approach is taken.
- Council recognises there is a problem with the Gateway Referral System and that the appointment of a Gateway Officer needs to be prioritised and it is hoped they will be in post by October 2018.
- Council has confirmed that as part of the Homelessness Strategy, evictions from supported accommodation due to rent arrears will be reviewed.

- In response to concerns about out of hours support for rough sleepers, the Council is updating rough sleepers resource cards and is looking at how the Council communicates to the third sector about out of hours provision. The Council's Operations Manager will also discuss issues further with a representative of Matthew House.

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