



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 13 January 2020

Cabinet Member Question Session

Purpose:	To enable the Committee to question Cabinet Members on their work. The Committee's questions will broadly explore Cabinet Members' priorities, actions, achievements and impact in relation to areas of responsibility.
Content:	The following Cabinet Member will appear before the Committee to participate in a question and answer session: a) Councillor Rob Stewart, Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Strategy
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question the Cabinet Member on relevant matters • Make comments and recommendations as necessary
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer:	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
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1. Introduction

1.1 One of the most important roles that scrutiny carries out is holding the Council's Cabinet to account. The Cabinet (also known as the Executive) is made up of the Leader and other councillors, appointed by the Leader, who are allocated specific portfolio responsibilities.

1.2 There are 10 Cabinet portfolios:

	Cabinet Portfolio	Cabinet Member
1	Economy & Strategy (Leader of the Council)	Cllr Rob Stewart
2	Delivery & Performance (Joint-Interim Deputy Leader)	Cllr David Hopkins

3	Homes, Energy & Service Transformation (Joint-Interim Deputy Leader)	Cllr Andrea Lewis
4	Better Communities	Cllr Alyson Pugh (People – Lead) Cllr Andrew Stevens (Place – Lead)
5	Care, Health & Ageing Well	Cllr Mark Child
6	Children Services	Cllr Elliott King (Early Years - Lead) Cllr Sam Pritchard (Young People – Lead)
7	Education Improvement, Learning & Skills	Cllr Jennifer Raynor
8	Environment & Infrastructure Management	Cllr Mark Thomas
9	Investment, Regeneration & Tourism	Cllr Robert Francis-Davies
10	Resilience & Strategic Collaboration	Cllr Clive Lloyd

NOTE:

- All Cabinet Members have responsibility for Lead Elements of Sustainable Swansea & Poverty Reduction
- Better Communities and Children Services Portfolios operate under a job share system with two named Councillors sharing the workload, split into 2 specialist knowledge areas, however, formally they remain as one cabinet portfolio. Each individual holds office for a rolling 3 month period and during that time assume responsibility for the overall portfolio. However, the workload in gathering information and learning will be shared.

1.3 By acting as a ‘critical friend’ scrutiny has the opportunity to challenge the Cabinet and individual cabinet members on their actions and performance in relation to their areas of responsibilities.

1.4 Cabinet Member Question Sessions have become a main feature of Committee meetings. At least one cabinet member is scheduled to appear at each monthly Committee meeting, ensuring all Cabinet Members appear before the Committee over the course of a year, in order to ask questions on their work. Questions will focus on their priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

2. Cabinet Member Question Session

2.1 The following Cabinet Members will appear before the Committee:

- a) Councillor Rob Stewart, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy & Strategy

2.2 The Cabinet portfolio responsibilities are set out below:

- 5G Project (City Deal)
- Brexit & New Economic Relationships
- Capital Programme
- City Deal Delivery
- City Centre Redevelopment
- City Region Joint Committee Chair
- Communications
- Community Leadership
- Constitutional Changes
- Finance Strategy & Budget & Saving Delivery
- Information & Business Change (inc. ICT)
- Local & Regional Investment Strategy
- Planning Policy (Regional)
- Public Services Board (PSB)
- Regeneration Strategy & Major Projects
- Regional Working Lead (All Bodies)
- Strategic Partnerships

2.3 As Leader of the Council, Cllr. Stewart is responsible for:

- providing political leadership to the Council
- working with officers to lead the organisation
- appointing the Cabinet
- managing and leading the work of the Cabinet and chairing meetings
- delegation of executive functions that allow the Cabinet and Officers to make decisions and manage day-to-day delivery of Council Services, in line with the Council's overall policies and budget

3. Approach to Questions

3.1 At each Cabinet Member Question Session the Committee will generally ask Cabinet Members about:

- relevant priorities / objectives (e.g. policy commitments), notable activities and achievements, improvement / impact made, and service user / public engagement.
- what they hope to achieve over the coming months and challenges, including any key decisions they plan take to Cabinet over the next year.
- reflections on their engagement with scrutiny and whether there is any issue relevant to their portfolio that they would suggest for scrutiny, not otherwise covered in the work programme – to ensure scrutiny activity is aligned to priorities and focussed on the right things.

3.2 In terms of themes that cut across all cabinet portfolios, the Committee is interested in asking Cabinet Members about:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act – impact on their work / decisions e.g. what they are doing to achieve the well-being goals and ways of working, e.g. focus on long-term thinking, collaboration / involvement etc.; any regional / collaborative working relevant to their portfolio responsibilities.
- Public Services Board (PSB) – their relationship with the work of the PSB; how the PSB impacts on their portfolio and how it is making a difference etc.
- Poverty Reduction – their contribution to the commitment to tackle poverty.
- Sustainable Swansea – their contribution to the transformation programme.

3.3 Cabinet Members will be invited to make introductory remarks before taking questions from the Committee. The Cabinet Member has provided a report on 'headlines' in relation to the portfolio to help the Committee focus on priorities, actions, achievements and impact - see **Appendix 1**.

3.4 Amongst key themes / questions from the Committee is the intention to ask about:

- The Council Budget.
- Swansea Central / City Deal.
- The roll out of 5G wireless network in Swansea (public health concerns).
- Public Services Board.

3.5 With reference to agreed Scrutiny Improvement Objectives the Committee should ensure the Q & A Session also enables it to:

- Follow up, where necessary, on progress with relevant Scrutiny Working Group recommendations to assess impact / outcomes
- Raise any outstanding actions in respect of any other scrutiny activities / recommendations.
- Ask about future key decisions so the Committee can identify any issues which they may want to discuss at an earlier stage than cabinet reporting.
- Encourage Cabinet Members to consider reporting to scrutiny / consulting on significant issues and planned decisions at an early stage to enable views of scrutiny to be taken.

3.6 Following each session the chair will write to Cabinet Members in order to capture the main issues discussed, views expressed by the Committee, and any actions for them to consider.

- 3.7 If the Committee wishes to conduct more detailed scrutiny of any of the issues raised during the Q & A session then this should be agreed through the normal work planning process and planned for a future meeting. This will also allow proper time for preparation.

4. Previous Scrutiny

- 4.1 The correspondence following last year's Q & A session on Economy & Strategy (January 2019) is **attached**, and Committee Members may wish to follow up on previous discussion.
- 4.2 Members may also wish to follow up, as necessary, on the Cabinet Member's engagement with relevant Scrutiny Panels / Working Groups over the past year.

The following Panels are in regular correspondence with the Leader / Cabinet Member and over the past year he was written to about the following specific issues:

- Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Budget Monitoring (Jan & Aug 2019)
 - Annual Review of Well-being Objectives and Corporate Plan 2018/22 (Jan 2019)
 - Performance Monitoring (Jan 2019)
 - Draft Budget Proposals (Jan 2019)
 - Annual Budget (Feb 2019)

- Development & Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Project Monitoring (Feb, Apr, Aug & Nov 2019)
 - Student Accommodation (Feb 2019)
 - Swansea Central Phase 1 Arena (Apr 2019)
 - City Deal Business Cases (Apr 2019)
 - Pre-decision Scrutiny: Swansea Central Phase 1 - Final Delivery Report (Nov 2019)

- Public Services Board (PSB) Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Live Well, Age Well PSB Objective (Mar 2019)
 - PSB Pooled Budget (Mar 2019)
 - Early Years PSB Objective (Apr 2019)
 - PSB Governance (Apr & Jul 2019)
 - PSB Annual Report (Apr 2019)

Other:

Brexit Working Group

The Working Group wrote to the Leader following a meeting in September. It was satisfied that the Council was as prepared as it can be, and working closely with the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association. Members, however, shared some concerns and issues for the Council to consider: e.g. the need to ensure clear messages to the public to address any misunderstanding about impacts, and avoid any anxiety such as panic buying (food, fuel, medicines etc); uncertainty around funding support for Councils to prepare for Brexit; and potential opportunities that Brexit may present e.g. for the port of Swansea. A follow up meeting of the Working Group will be held post Brexit, when the impact(s) is likely to be clearer.

Regional Working Inquiry Follow Up:

The Inquiry Panel concluded monitoring of the inquiry panel recommendations in October 2019. The letter to the Cabinet Member is included in the agenda papers under Item 10 (Scrutiny Letters). Since the inquiry concluded in 2018, there has been some movement in relation to regional working in Wales. The Panel were pleased that the inquiry had helped to raise the profile of regional working and has informed and began to provide clarity on the Council's approach to regional collaboration.

Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee:

The Leader has been held to account over the past year as current Chair of the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee. He attended meetings in January (Governance Arrangements; Business Plans), April (Update on Various City Deal Reviews), September (Action Plan Progress following City Deal Reviews) and October (Tidal Lagoon, Local Swansea Projects – Digital Village / Digital Square).

5. Future Scrutiny

- 5.1 The Committee should note that the Cabinet Member will be engaged in the following planned / future activity:

Scrutiny Performance Panels – the Cabinet Member will continue to be involved as Panels monitor and challenge relevant service delivery, polices and performance.

- 5.2 More specifically, the Committee should note that the Cabinet Member will be engaged in the following:

- Service Improvement & Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Budget Proposals (20 Jan 2020)
 - Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Annual Budget (26 Feb 2020)

- Development and Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Digital Village – Designs and Plans (27 Jan 2020)
- Public Services Board Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Live Well, Age Well Objective – Action Plan Progress (Jan 2020)
- Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee – meetings in January, March and May 2020.

6. Other Questions

6.1 For each Cabinet Member Q & A Session the Committee invites members of the public and other scrutiny councillors (not on the Committee) to suggest questions. It is up to the Committee how to deal with any suggested questions within the Session.

6.2 On this occasion, no questions have been submitted.

7. Next Session

7.1 The next scheduled Cabinet Member Question Session, on 10 February, is with the Cabinet Member for Care, Health & Ageing Well, Councillor Mark Child AND the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure Management, Councillor Mark Thomas. The Committee should identify specific questions / key themes, which it wishes to cover in these sessions. This can be discussed under Item 9 – Scrutiny Work Programme.

7.2 As usual, all scrutiny councillors and members of the public will be able to suggest questions.

8. Legal Implications

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

9. Financial Implications

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

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Key Headlines: Economy & Strategy (Leader) Portfolio

Appendix 2: Previous Correspondence