



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 19 January 2021

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, Finance & 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 Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer:	Tracey Meredith, Chief Legal Officer
Report Author:	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer:	Paul Cridland

1. Introduction

- 1.1 One of the most important roles that scrutiny carries out is holding the Council's Cabinet to account. The Scrutiny Work Programme enables this to happen in a number of ways through different scrutiny activities, including special Q & A sessions with Cabinet Members.
- 1.2 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. There are 10 Cabinet portfolios:

	Cabinet Portfolio	Cabinet Member
1	Economy, Finance & Strategy (Leader of the Council)	Cllr Rob Stewart
2	Delivery & Operations (Joint Deputy Leader)	Cllr David Hopkins
3	Homes, Energy & Service Transformation (Joint Deputy Leader)	Cllr Andrea Lewis
4	Adult Social Care & Community Health Services	Cllr Clive Lloyd
5	Business Improvement & Performance	Cllr Andrew Stevens
6	Children Services	Cllr Elliott King
7	Education Improvement, Learning & Skills	Cllr Jennifer Raynor
8	Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management	Cllr Mark Thomas
9	Investment, Regeneration & Tourism	Cllr Robert Francis-Davies
10	Supporting Communities	Shared: Cllr Alyson Pugh Cllr Louise Gibbard

NOTE:

- All Cabinet Members have responsibility for Poverty Reduction
- Supporting Communities portfolio operates under a job share system with two Councillors sharing the responsibilities. The portfolio has been split into two specialist knowledge areas with each job share cabinet member dedicating their time to lead on specific areas with support from the other cabinet member. However, formally this remains as one cabinet portfolio. The sitting Cabinet Member has total responsibility for the whole Cabinet Portfolio during the rolling 3 month (approx.) period that they hold Office; 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. Questions will focus on their priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

2. Cabinet Member Question Session

2.1 The following Cabinet Member will appear before the Committee:

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

2.2 The Cabinet portfolio responsibilities are set out below:

- Brexit & New Economic Relationships
- Capital Programme Delivery
- City Deal Delivery
- City Centre Redevelopment
- Communications
- Community Leadership
- Constitutional Changes
- Emergency Planning
- Finance Strategy, Budget & Saving Delivery
- Financial Services
- Future Digital Networks (City Deal)
- Legal Services
- Local & Regional Investment Strategy
- Planning Policy (Regional)
- Poverty Reduction
- Public Services Board (PSB)
- Recovery Plan Lead
- Regeneration Strategy & Major Projects
- Regional Working Lead (All Bodies)
- Strategic Partnerships
- Swansea Bay City Region Joint Committee - Chair
- Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) – Deputy Leader
- WLGA Lead on Europe, Brexit, Economy & Energy
- WLGA representative to LGA

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 the 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.

3.3 Cabinet Members will be invited to make introductory remarks before taking questions from the Committee. The Leader 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**. It focuses on current key areas of national and local significance.

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

- Current COVID-19 impact, response and recovery
- Brexit implications, preparedness and response
- The Council budget
- Partnership working (incl. the Great Western Gateway new economic partnership)

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 with the Leader (January 2020) is **attached**, and Committee Members may wish to follow up on previous discussion, which covered a variety of topics, including:
- Brexit
 - 5G Network Roll Out
 - Climate Emergency
 - National Park City Status
 - Foreshore Sites
 - Castle Square
 - Hafod Morfa Copperworks
 - Felindre Strategic Employment Site, and
 - Student Accommodation
- 4.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee has also written to the Leader over the past year on the following:
- COVID-19 Emergency Surge Hospital - Pre-decision Scrutiny (Apr 2020)
 - Council Response to COVID-19 pandemic (Jun 2020)
 - Council's COVID-19 response and recovery planning (Jul 2020)
 - COVID-19 update (Sep 2020)
 - COVID-19 response and recovery (Dec 2020)
 - Public Services Board (Jan 2021)
- 4.3 The Committee may also wish to follow up, as necessary, on the Leader's engagement with relevant Scrutiny Panels / Working Groups over the past year and recommendations made.
- 4.4 The Committee should note the Leader is subject to scrutiny by a number of Performance Panels and should be careful to avoid duplication with these other scrutiny activities. 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:
 - Draft Budget Proposals (Jan 2020)
 - Annual Budget pre-decision scrutiny (Feb 2020)
 - Budget Monitoring; WAO Report on Use of Data (Mar 2020)
 - Q1 Budget Monitoring, Review of Revenue Reserves, Mid-Term Budget Statement (Nov 2020)

- Development & Regeneration Scrutiny Performance Panel:
 - Project Monitoring; Digital Village (Feb 2020)
 - Project Update (Oct 2020)
 - Project Monitoring; City Centre developments (Nov 2020)

Other:

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. Meetings of the Joint Committee took place in January and October 2020.

5. Future Scrutiny

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

- Service Improvement & Finance and Development & Regenerations Scrutiny Performance Panels – the Leader will continue to be involved as Panels monitor and challenge relevant service delivery, policies and performance. This included pre-decision scrutiny of the Annual Budget taking place at the Service Improvement & Finance Panel meeting on 17 February.
- Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee – next meeting scheduled for February.

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, the Committee has been requested by a councillor not on the Committee to raise the following:

- Emergency Planning – whether, in light of the current pandemic, a Joint Resilience Committee with Neath Port Talbot needs to be re-established? One that was held up as good practice previously by the Wales Audit Office. When the previous committee was in operation there were a number of serious incidents that took place e.g. Fforestfach Fire and Gleison Colliery disaster, which involved councillors and informed them of their roles and responsibilities. Many councillors may be unaware of the function of Emergency Planning and as councillors are best placed to represent their Wards, ask that the Leader consider setting up this committee?

7. Legal Implications

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

8. Financial Implications

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

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

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

Appendix 2: Previous Correspondence