Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council

Scrutiny Annual Report
2019/20

DRAFT

Scrutiny Programme Committee
City and County of Swansea - Dinas a Sir Abertawe

Contents

Appendices:
1 - Scrutiny Dispatches Impact Report - November 2019
2 - Scrutiny Dispatches Impact Report - February 2020

1. Chair's Foreword

Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

I am proud to present the third annual report of this Council term, as new Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. I must of course recognise the leadership and contribution of Cllr. Mary Jones, who led the Committee since 2014 and stood down from the Chair in June 2020.

Scrutiny is a vital part of local democracy and good governance. This report reflects on the range of different activities carried out by scrutiny councillors over the past year to make sure the work of the Council is accountable and transparent, effective and efficient, and helps the Council to achieve its objectives and drive improvement, by questioning and providing challenge to decision-makers.

Our report focuses on how scrutiny has made a difference for a better Swansea, and our efforts to support the continuous improvement of scrutiny practice. Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some disruption to the work of scrutiny over the last year. Scrutiny activity has had to be flexible and responsive to organisational pressures as the Council focuses its efforts on tackling the pandemic and dealing with the impact locally. Since March 2020 meetings have been conducted on-line via Microsoft Teams. Capacity to support the scrutiny work programme was also reduced due to a vacant post in the Scrutiny Team, meaning some planned activities were put on hold. Therefore 2019-20, and perhaps the current year as the pandemic continues, are not typical and, whilst data is shown in the report, there is little value in comparison with previous years.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2019-2020 municipal year was extended for several months, so this Annual Report covers scrutiny activity between May 2019 and September 2020.

Measuring the performance of scrutiny in a meaningful way is not particularly easy, however we have tried to take a 'results based' approach to tell you about:

- How much scrutiny we did
- How well we did it
- How much scrutiny affected the business of the Council
- What the outcomes of scrutiny were

We hope that this report provides you with assurance and confidence that councillors involved in scrutiny are contributing to better services, policies and decisions, and a better Swansea.

Finally, I must give my thanks to all of the councillors who have led or participated in scrutiny over the past year.

Councillor Peter Black

2.   Swansea Scrutiny Results Scorecard 2019-20

<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">Scrutiny Practice</td>
<td>A. How much scrutiny did we do?</td>
<td>B. How well did we do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>
1. Number of Committee meetings = 18 ↑ (14)

2. Number of Panel & Working Group meetings = 54 ↓ (95)

3. Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 1 ↔ (1)

4. Number of Working Group topics completed = 1 ↓ (8)
</td>
<td>
5. Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 73% ↑ (69%)

6. Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 62% ↓ (71%)

7. Meetings with public observers = 50% ↑ (49%)

8. Meetings with public input = 21% ↓ (27%)

9. Meetings attracting media coverage = 33% ↑ (32%)
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="2">Scrutiny Outcomes</td>
<td>C. How much did scrutiny affect the business of the Council?</td>
<td>D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>
10. Number of Chairs' Letters sent to Cabinet Members = 77 ↑ (64)

11. Average time for Cabinet Member response letter = 22 days ↑ (20)

12. Letters responded to within 21 day target = 69% ↑ (63%)

13. Number of scrutiny reports to Cabinet = 2 ↔ (2)

14. Cabinet Action plans agreed = 3 ↑ (1)

15. Follow ups undertaken = 3 ↑ (2)

16. Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre decision scrutiny = 5 ↓ (8)

17. Number of Cabinet reports subject to Call-in = 0 ↓ (1)

18. Cabinet members who attended at least one question and answer session at the Scrutiny Programme Committee = 80% ↓ (100%)
</td>
<td>
19. Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = 90% ↓ (100%)

20. Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 48% ↓ (56%)
</td>
</tr>
</table>

(Last year in brackets) ↓↑ = notable change, ↓↑ = small change, ↔ no change

3.   About the Indicators

A.   How much scrutiny did we do?

3.1   Number of Committee meetings = 18

The Council has a single overarching Scrutiny Committee, called the Scrutiny Programme Committee, which met 18 times.

The Committee is responsible for developing and managing the overall Scrutiny Work Programme. Overarching priorities were shaped by the annual work planning conference, which took place in June 2019 (open to all non-executive councillors), that heard a range of perspectives on what should be included. All councillors can suggest particular topics of concern for possible scrutiny.

The councillor-led Scrutiny Work Programme is guided by the overriding principle that the work of scrutiny should be strategic and significant, focussed on issues of concern, and represent a good use of scrutiny time and resources.

Specific scrutiny activities included in the work programme are carried out either by the Committee or by establishing informal Panels and Working Groups. All meetings are held in public.

Formal Committee meetings for scrutiny give councillors the opportunity to hold cabinet members to account and provide challenge on a range of policy and service issues. This included holding structured Question & Answer sessions with cabinet members to explore their work, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

The following topics were also examined by the Committee:

- Housing Commissioning Review Progress
- Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report

Comparison with previous years:
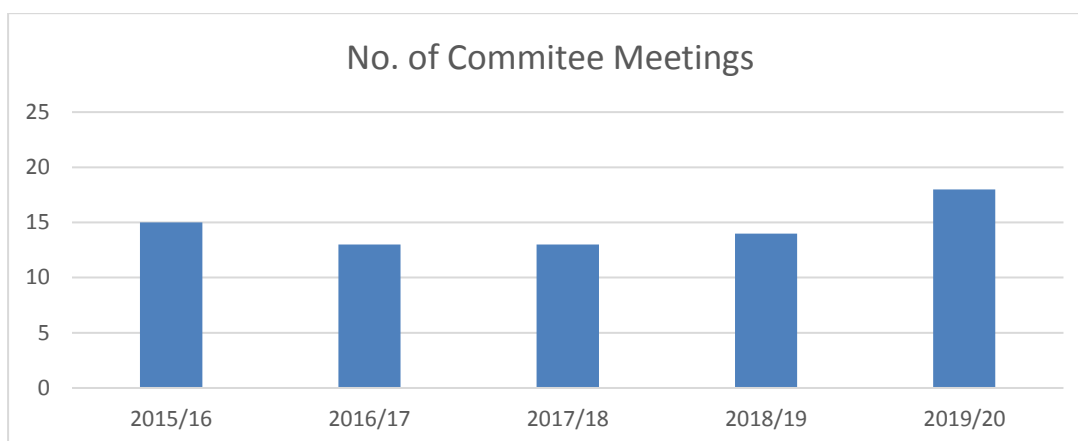
3.2 Number of Panel & Working Group meetings = 54

It is important that the Scrutiny Work Programme strikes a balance between community concerns and strategic issues. The Committee considers what specific topics should feature in the programme so that it is focussed on the right things.

Most of the work of scrutiny is delegated to informal topic based Panels and Working Groups. Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups are established by the Scrutiny Programme Committee, with an appointed convener (chair), to carry out specific scrutiny activities.

There are two types of panels:

Inquiry Panels - these undertake in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis.

Topics examined	Convener	Activity
• **Equalities** Key Question: How effectively is the Council meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Duty for Wales)?	Cllr. Louise Gibbard	Final report presented to Cabinet on 19 Sep 2019. Cabinet response agreed 21 Nov 2019.
• **Procurement** Key Question: What is the Council doing to ensure it procures locally, ethically, and greenly while being cost effective and transparent in its practices?	Cllr. Chris Holley	Pre-inquiry planning meeting held 24 Oct 2019 to agree focus of inquiry. Work was placed on hold due to resources.

Performance Panels - these provide in-depth performance / financial monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas.

Aligned to a new Council corporate priority and following on from the Natural Environment Scrutiny Inquiry, the Committee established an additional Performance Panel to focus on the Council's commitments on the natural environment and biodiversity.

Performance Panels	Convener
• Service Improvement & Finance (monthly)	Cllr. Chris Holley
• Education (monthly)	Cllr. Lyndon Jones
• Adult Services (monthly)	Cllr. Peter Black
• Child & Family Services (every two months)	Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams
• Development & Regeneration (every two months)	Cllr. Jeff Jones
• Natural Environment (quarterly)	Cllr. Peter Jones
• Public Services Board (multi-agency Panel meeting twice yearly)	Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee

Working Groups are one-off meetings established to enable a 'light-touch' approach to specific topics of concern.

Working Groups	Convener
• Brexit	Cllr Peter Jones

The additional Performance Panel also meant reduced capacity to support Working Groups. Four one-off Working Groups were included in the work programme. The other three Working Groups were placed on hold due to resources.

3.3 Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 1
Work on the following in-depth inquiry was completed:

- Equalities: *How effectively is the Council meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Duty for Wales)?*

3.4 Number of Working Group topics completed = 1
Work on the following topic(s) was completed through meetings of Working Groups:

- Brexit

B. How well did we do?

3.5 Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 73%

The rate of councillor attendance measures an important aspect of effectiveness as it reflects the engagement of councillors in the scrutiny process.

Council determines the membership of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. However, membership of the various informal Panels and Working Groups is based on interest shown by councillors in the topics under scrutiny. Based on expressions of interest the membership of Panels and Working Groups is determined by the Committee.

Attendance figures for councillors are collected by the Council's Democratic Services Team and published on the Council's website. Our figure is an overall attendance figure that includes the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Panel meetings and Working Groups.

Comparison with previous years:
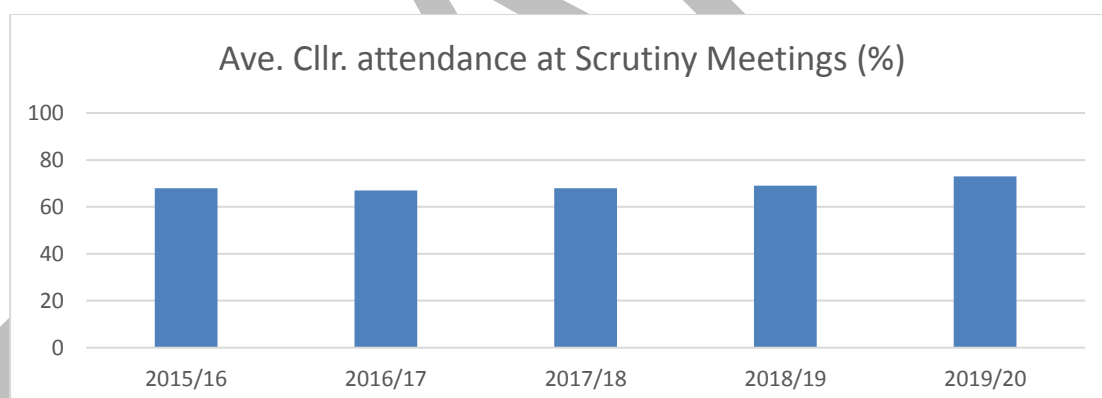
3.6 Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 62%

All backbench councillors have the opportunity to participate in scrutiny work regardless of committee membership. New scrutiny topics, once agreed, were advertised to all non-executive councillors and expressions of interest sought to lead and/or participate in these activities. It enables councillors to participate based on interest, and enables them to build up specialist expertise.

The majority of backbench councillors were involved in scrutiny, through either the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Panels or Working Groups.

Comparison with previous years:

Backbench Cllrs. actively involved in scrutiny (%)
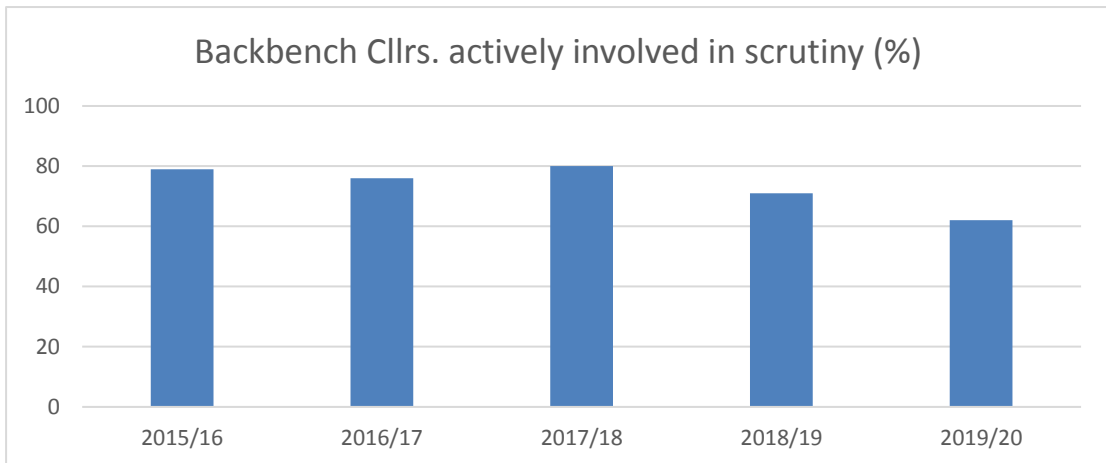
3.7 Meetings with public observers = 50%

Scrutiny is important as a mechanism for community engagement. All scrutiny meetings, whether the Committee or Panels and Working Group, are conducted in public, subject to specific items of business that on rare occasions may contain exempt information. On average, half of the 72 scrutiny meetings held were observed by persons in the public gallery, which indicates there is a significant focus of scrutiny on matters of public interest.

The move to remote meetings during the pandemic has affected our ability to report accurately on the number of public observers.

Comparison with previous years:

% of meetings with public observers
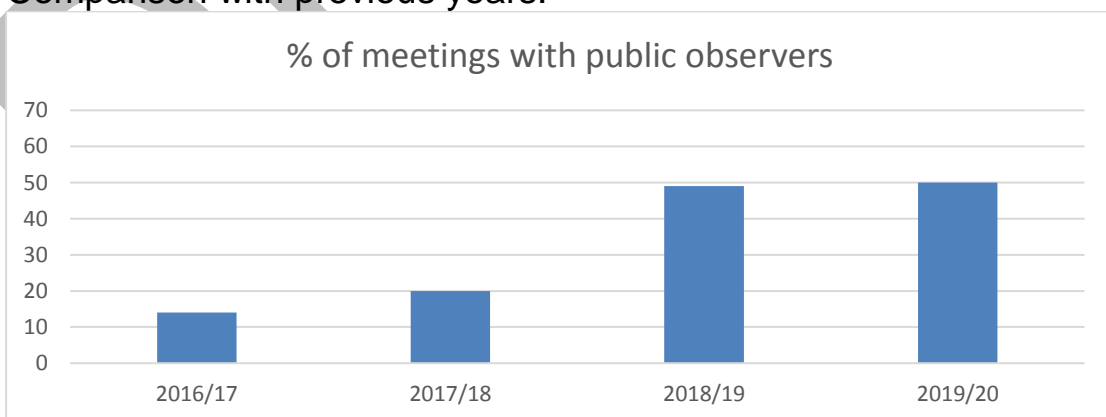
3.8   Meetings with public input = 21%

As well as attracting interest and observers to listen to what is being discussed, councillors are keen to increase active public involvement in the work of scrutiny. 21% of all scrutiny meetings had some form of such engagement and public input. This input can take various forms, including submission of questions for scrutiny sessions with cabinet members, making suggestions for the scrutiny work programme, contributing evidence to specific items under scrutiny - whether in person or reflected in the meeting agenda.

Comparison with previous years:

% of meetings with public input

Year	%
2016/17	19
2017/18	11
2018/19	27
2019/20	21
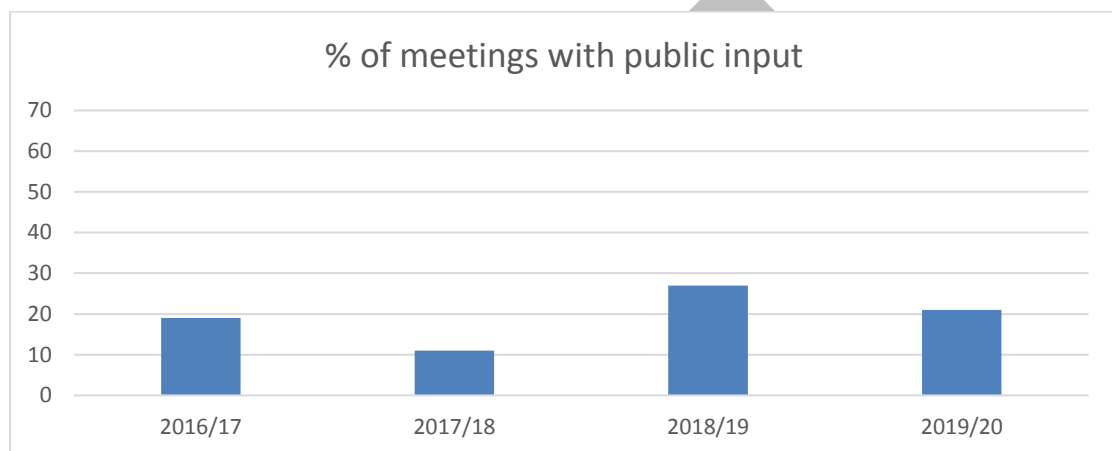
3.9   Meetings attracting media coverage = 33%

As well as attracting interest from individuals and getting members of the public to engage directly, a measure of whether scrutiny is focussed on the right things and is making an impact is the amount of media coverage that scrutiny is attracting. We found that 33% of scrutiny meetings made the news. Across all activities there were at least 28 scrutiny discussions reported in the local press (print and on-line). Issues which generated coverage included: Foreshore Development, Tourism, Air Pollution, City Centre Regeneration, Council Budget, COVID-19, Flooding, Social Services

Comparison with previous years:

## % of meetings attracting media coverage
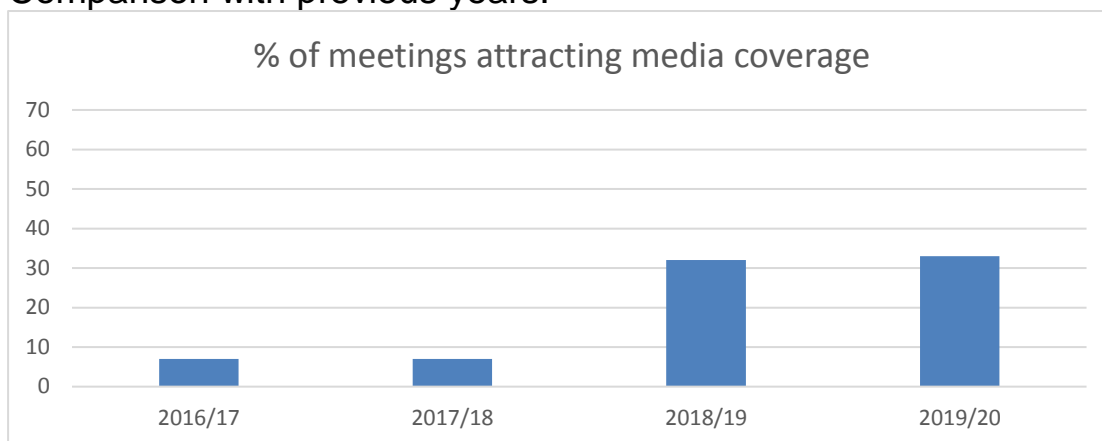
C. How much did scrutiny affect the business of the Council?

3.10 Number of Chairs' Letters sent to Cabinet Members = 77

Chairs letters are an established part of the scrutiny process in Swansea. They allow the Committee and Panel meetings / Working Groups to communicate quickly and efficiently directly with relevant cabinet members. They will send letters to raise concerns, recognise good practice, ask for further information and make recommendations for improvement, reflecting the discussion at Committee / Panel / Working Group meetings. Letters are effectively 'mini-reports' with conclusions and proposals from scrutiny – and where necessary require a response. 77 letters were sent to Cabinet Members.

Comparison with previous years:

No. of Chairs' Letters sent to Cabinet Members
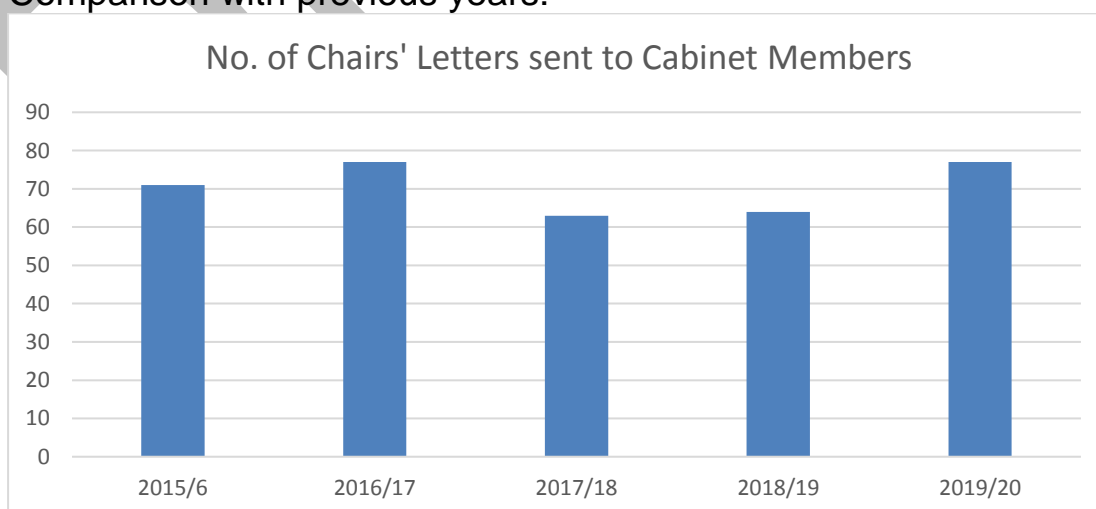
3.11 Average time for Cabinet Member response letter = 22 days

When scrutiny letters are sent to Cabinet Members and require a response   Cabinet Members are required to respond within 21 calendar days. The average response time for letters sent was 22 days, which indicates that scrutiny is   generally getting a timely response to views, concerns, and any suggested action for Cabinet Members.

Comparison with previous years:

Average time for Cabinet Member response letter (days)
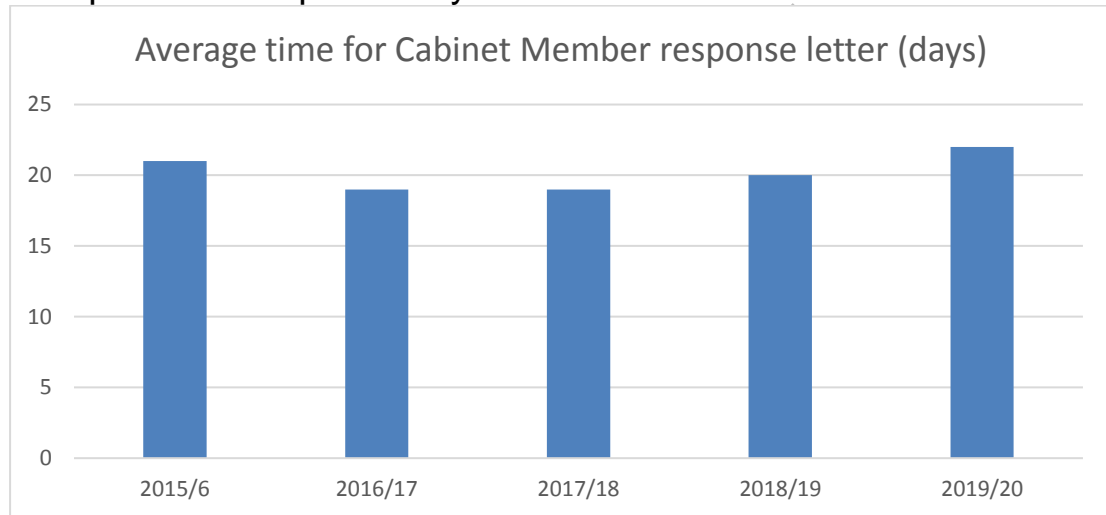
3.12 Letters responded to within 21 day target = 69%

Whilst the response to scrutiny letters was on average 22 days, some letters did take longer. The number of letters responded to within the 21 day target was 69% (33 out of 48 letters).

Comparison with previous years:

% of letters responded to within 21 day target

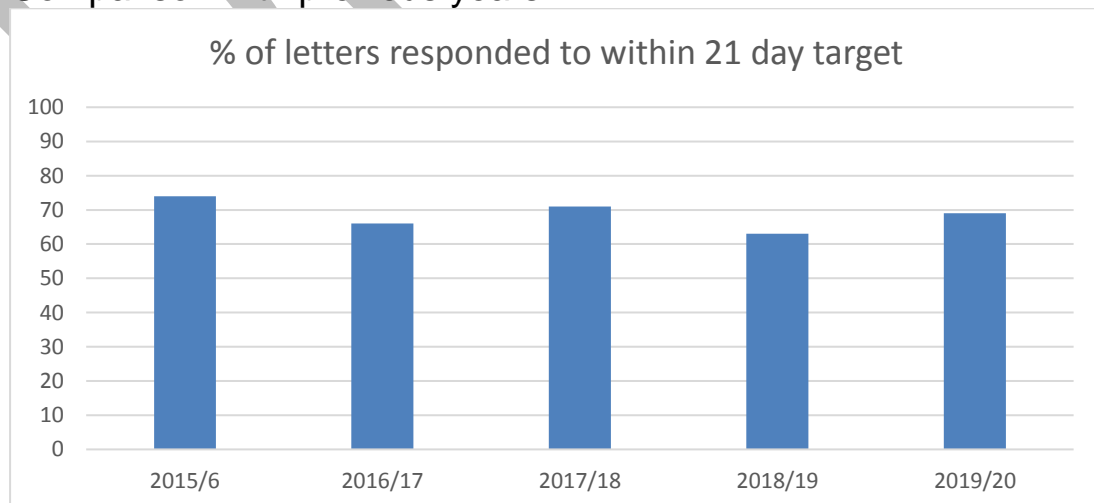### 3.13 Number of Scrutiny reports to Cabinet = 2

In-depth inquiries are reported to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations agreed by scrutiny and action plan on how the recommendations will be implemented. Scrutiny Working Groups also have the option of either writing a letter to relevant Cabinet Member(s) or report to Cabinet, depending on outcomes from discussion. The following were reported to Cabinet, with the number of recommendations from each report shown:

Report	Convener	Cabinet Meeting	No. of Recommendations
Tourism Working Group	Cllr. Peter Jones	July 2019	12
Equalities Inquiry	Cllr. Louise Gibbard	September 2019	18

Comparison with previous years:

No. of scrutiny reports to Cabinet
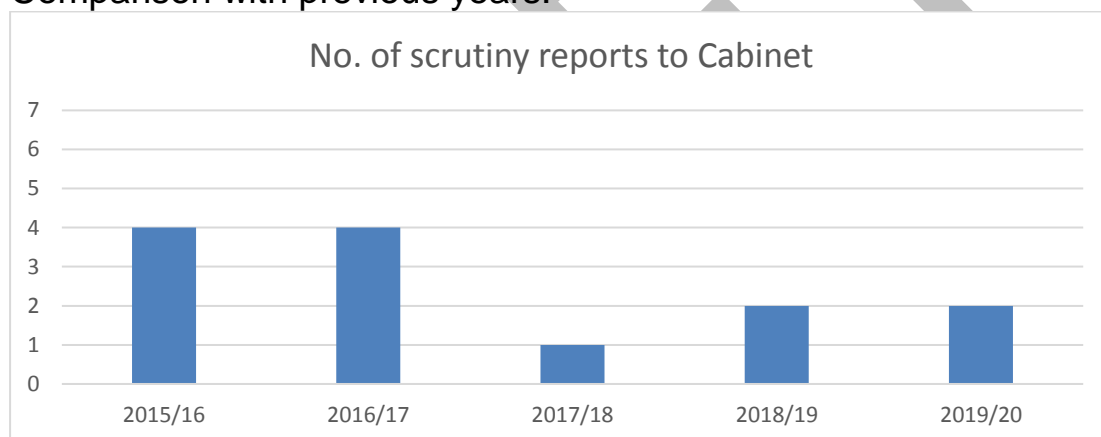
3.14 Cabinet action plans agreed = 3

Once recommendations and an action plan have been agreed by cabinet, scrutiny will follow up on progress with implementation and impact. The following action plans were published and agreed by Cabinet:

Report	Cabinet Meeting	Response to Recommendations
Natural Environment Inquiry	July 2019	of the 20 recommendations: 16 were agreed, 2 agreed in part, and 2 were not agreed
Tourism Working Group	July 2019	of the 12 recommendations: 8 were agreed, 1 agreed in part, and 3 were not agreed.
Equalities Inquiry	November 2019	all 18 recommendations were accepted

Comparison with previous years:

Cabinet action plans agreed

Year	Value
2015/16	3
2016/17	4
2017/18	2
2018/19	1
2019/20	3
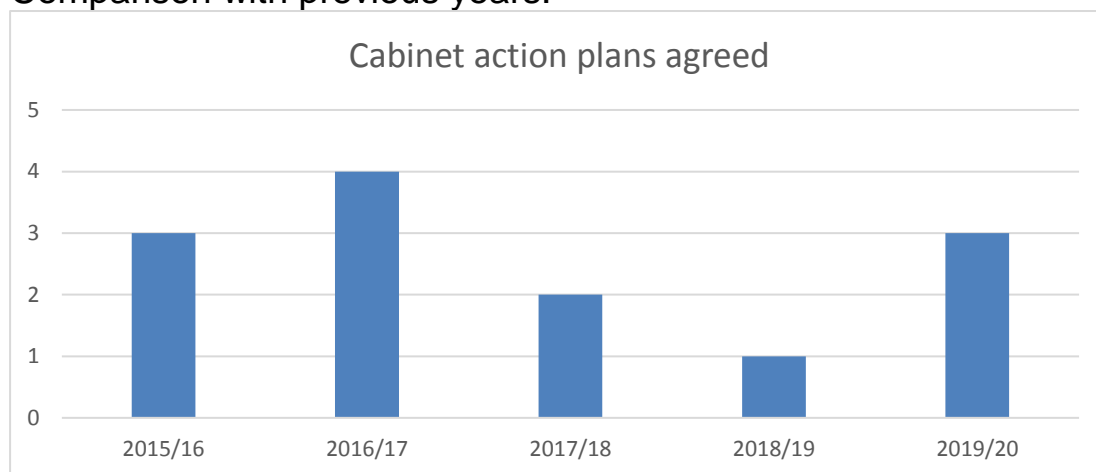
3.15 Follow ups undertaken = 3

Inquiry Panels reconvene to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and cabinet action plans, and assess the impact of their work. A meeting will usually be held 6-12 months following cabinet decision, with a further follow up arranged if required.

In order to check whether the agreed action plans have been carried out, scrutiny will ask for follow up reports from cabinet members. If councillors are satisfied they can then conclude the work for that inquiry. Both previous scrutiny inquiries that required a follow up were followed up:

Inquiry	Convener	Cabinet Action Plan agreed	Monitoring Status
Regional Working	Cllr. Lyndon Jones	August 2018	Complete – meeting held October 2019
Natural Environment	Cllr. Peter Jones	July 2019	Complete – meeting held September 2020

The Scrutiny Programme Committee will follow up any Working Group reports to Cabinet. The Tourism Working Group recommendations were followed up in March 2020.

Comparison with previous years:

Follow ups undertaken

Year	Follow ups
2015/16	5
2016/17	3
2017/18	4
2018/19	2
2019/20	3
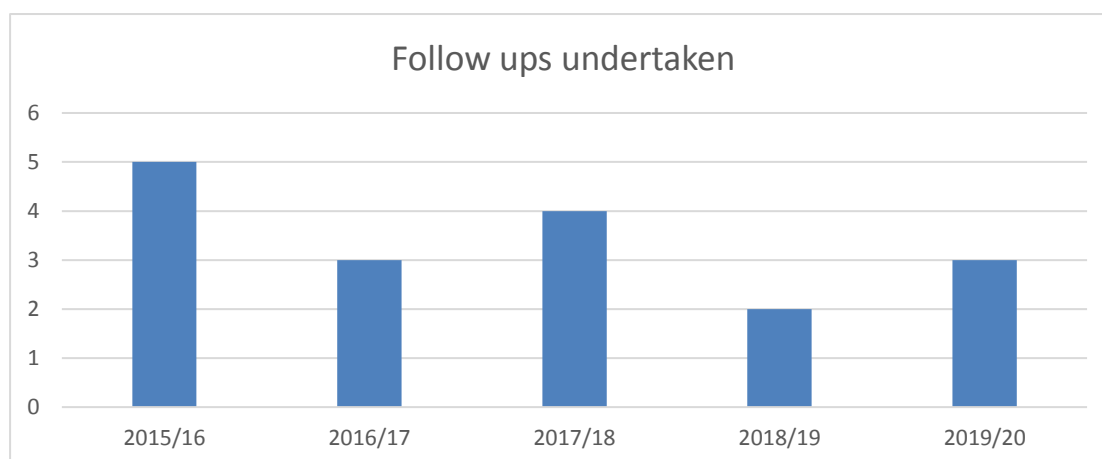
3.16 Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre-decision scrutiny = 5

Pre-decision scrutiny involves scrutiny councillors considering cabinet reports before cabinet makes a final decision. Taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications, the following five cabinet reports were subject to pre-decision scrutiny (carried out by the Committee or relevant Performance Panels), with views reported to Cabinet before decisions were taken:

Report	Cabinet Member	Cabinet Meeting	Undertaken by
Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System	Business Transformation & Performance	19 Sep 2019	Committee
Housing Commissioning Review Option Appraisal Report	Homes, Energy & Service Transformation	21 Nov 2019	Committee
Foreshore Sites - Public Consultation and Procurement Responses Summary and Next Steps.	Investment, Regeneration & Tourism	9 Jan 2020	Committee
Annual Budget	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	20 Feb 2020	Service Improvement & Finance Panel
COVID-19 Emergency Surge Hospital	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	27 Apr 2020	Committee

Comparison with previous years:

Pre-decision scrutiny

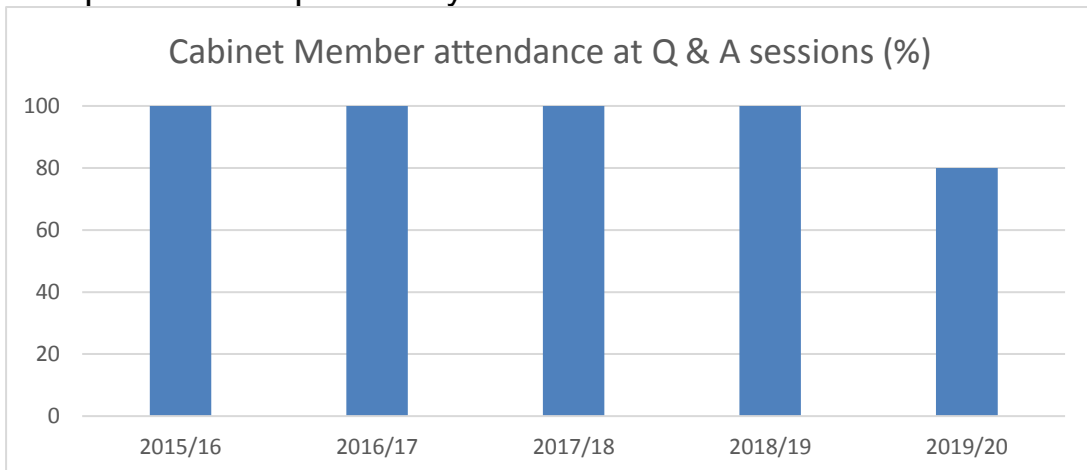| Year	Value
2015/16	6
2016/17	9
2017/18	12
2018/19	8
2019/20	5
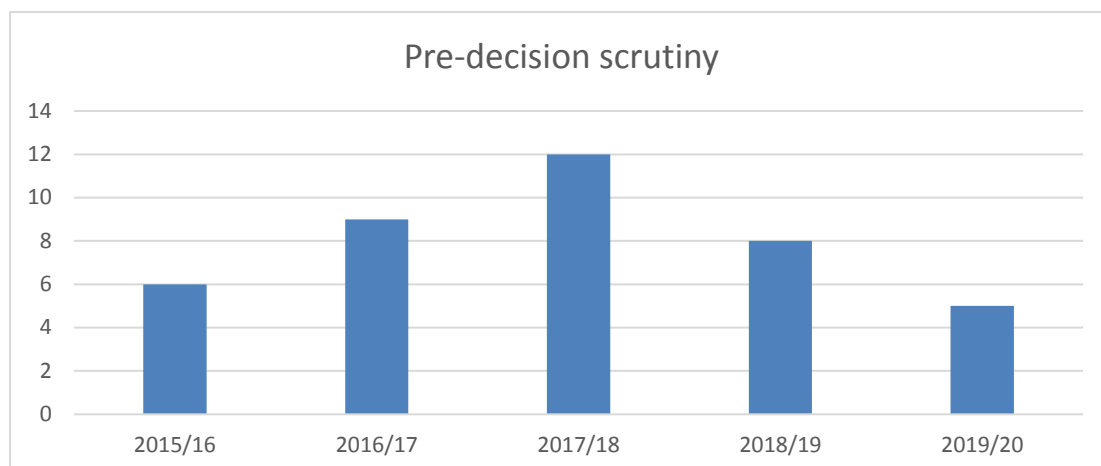
3.17 Number of Cabinet reports subject to Call-in = 0

During 2018-19, the Council agreed new call-in arrangements with scrutiny at the centre of the process. Any valid call-in of cabinet decisions leads to the calling of a special meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. A call-in can be made by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee or by any four councillors by giving notice in writing to the Head of Democratic Services within a specific call-in period. With the increase in pre-decision scrutiny seen over the last few years a large number of call-ins are not anticipated. There were no cabinet decisions 'called in' over the past year.

3.18 Cabinet members who attended at least one question and answer session at the Scrutiny Programme Committee – 80%

Cabinet members attend scrutiny meetings to answer questions and provide information. Cabinet attendance at scrutiny meetings is a good indicator that the 'holding to account' role of scrutiny is functioning well. Discrete question and answer session at the Scrutiny Programme Committee enable the Committee to explore the work of Cabinet Members, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact. It ensures that scrutiny provides regular challenge to decision-makers. As some meetings of the Committee were cancelled, during April and May 2020, Q & A sessions were not able to cover every cabinet portfolio.

Comparison with previous years:

Cabinet Member attendance at Q & A sessions (%)

Year	Value
2015/16	100
2016/17	100
2017/18	100
2018/19	100
2019/20	80

D.   What were the outcomes of scrutiny?

3.19 Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = 90%

The rate that cabinet accept scrutiny recommendations is a good indicator of whether scrutiny is making strong recommendations based on robust evidence. Cabinet responded to 18 scrutiny inquiry recommendations, and 12 Working Group recommendations.

Comparison with previous years:

Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet (%)

Year	Value
2015/16	97
2016/17	81
2017/18	92
2018/19	100
2019/20	90
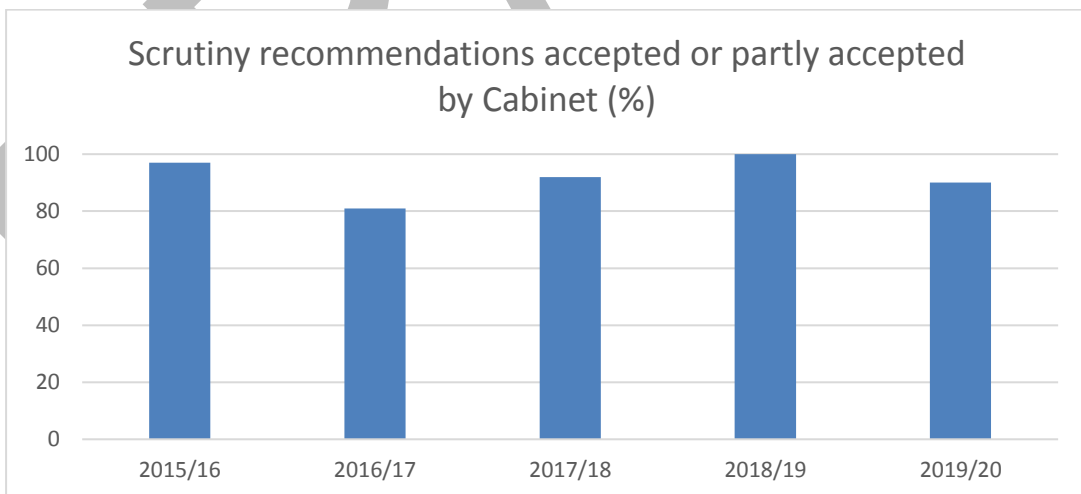
3.20 Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 48%

When follow up reports are presented to scrutiny (usually within 12 months following original cabinet decision) they detail which of the recommendations from the in-depth inquiry (or other scrutiny report) have been completed in line with the cabinet member's action plan and which have not. In the case of in-depth inquiries scrutiny councillors consider whether they agree with the assessment about implementation of recommendations, taking into account the evidence they are presented with about the changes that have happened following scrutiny and its impact.

This indictor represents the percentage of recommendations accepted by scrutiny as being completed for the year, and relates to the follow up of recommendations made by the Regional Working Inquiry and Natural Environment inquiry. A number of recommendations may have been reported as partially complete at the conclusion of formal monitoring. Therefore, in many cases implementation of scrutiny recommendations continues beyond the process of formal monitoring. If those recommendations were considered as complete the percentage would be 72%.

Comparison with previous years:

Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as complete (%)
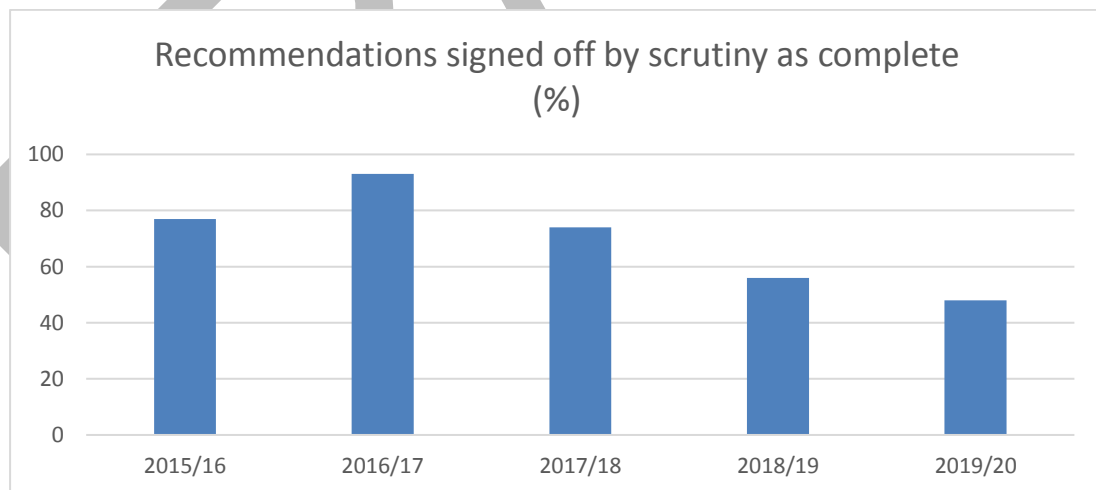
4. Impact

4.1 How Scrutiny Councillors have made a difference

4.1.1 Scrutiny Councillors make a difference by:

- Ensuring that Cabinet Members (and other decision-makers) are held to account through public question and answer sessions
- Making evidence based proposals on topics of concern through task and finish Scrutiny Inquiry Panels, and other scrutiny activities, that report to Cabinet
- Monitoring and challenging service performance and improvement through standing Scrutiny Performance Panels
- Addressing issues of concern through one off working groups
- Acting as a 'check' on the key decisions through pre-decision scrutiny and call-in
- Communicating concerns and proposals for improvement through regular publication of scrutiny letters and reports

4.1.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee produces a quarterly summary of the headlines from the work of scrutiny for Council and the public, which focussed on impact and how scrutiny is making a difference. The Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee reports the summary, known as Scrutiny Dispatches, to Council.

4.1.3 It is important to know that the work and the efforts of scrutiny councillors are having a positive impact and are delivering effective scrutiny. We make sure that the recommendations we make, in whatever scrutiny forum, are followed up to check on implementation and assess the impact of this work.

4.1.4 The difference made and impact of the overall work of scrutiny is also communicated via:
- press releases to the local media;
- regular posts to our Swansea Scrutiny blog;
- an email monthly subscription newsletter; and
- use of social media, including Twitter.

4.1.5 A selection of stories from the past year of scrutiny from Scrutiny Dispatches, which demonstrate the impact made, are ***appended***. This includes reference to:

- **Ensuring Swansea Council is meeting its Equalities duties** *(Equalities Inquiry)*

- **Holding Cabinet Members to Account** *(Scrutiny Programme Committee)*

- **Listening to the views of parents of adults with Mental Health Issues and Learning Disabilities** *(Adult Services Performance Panel)*

- **Preparing for Brexit** *(Brexit Working Group)*

- **Picking Up on Public Concerns** *(Natural Environment Performance Panel)*

- **Improving Cabinet Decisions** *(Committee and Performance Panels)*

- **Challenging School Improvement** *(Education Performance Panel)*

- **Monitoring Children's Social Services** *(Child & Family Services Performance Panel)*

- **Budget Scrutiny** *(Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel)*

- **Influencing decision-making on the Housing Commissioning Review** *(Scrutiny Programme Committee)*

5.   Feedback and Improvement

5.1   Improving Scrutiny

5.1.1 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. Annual review discussions are usually held within the Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Performance Panels, though this process was disrupted during the last year because of the pandemic.

5.1.2 However, the Scrutiny Programme Committee carried out an Annual Work Programme Review in September 2020, reflecting on the past year. To aid this process an informal meeting was held in August that provided opportunity for committee members to reflect on the work of the Committee and work programme, and identify any improvement and development issues.

5.1.3 As well as reviewing previously agreed improvement objectives, councillors identified areas of improvement in relation to the work programme and scrutiny practice, so that it is even more effective.

5.1.4 Members reflected positively on:

- external assessments of Swansea's scrutiny arrangements and practice over recent years.
- the support provided by officers in the Scrutiny Team.

5.1.5 The Committee also highlighted:

- the need for flexibility in the work programme to focus on the most pressing issues e.g. COVID, Brexit etc.
- the importance of Performance Panel work plans being focussed, and under constant review, to ensure they are effective, represent best use of time and resources, and meaningful, so that Panels can make the biggest impact / difference.

- the need to ensure Performance Panel work plans, when available, are reported to the Committee to improve Committee oversight of topics being examined, check coverage across cabinet portfolios, and help avoid duplication of effort between the Committee and Panels and between Panels.
- the potential for more reports to Cabinet, instead of letters, following Working Groups - which will result in more formal recommendations requiring formal response.
- that although there is good structured follow up for Inquiries, there should be more time to follow up on other recommendations, particularly from Working Groups.
- the importance of research support to scrutiny.

5.1.6 Looking ahead to the development of a new work programme the Committee agreed:

- The Scrutiny Programme Committee would move away from routine monthly Cabinet Member Q & A sessions to a more targeted approach, creating space to focus on issues of concern, and any gaps in the scrutiny work programme – with greater emphasis placed on Performance Panels to hold relevant Cabinet Members to account with clear opportunities for questioning;
- The Scrutiny Programme Committee would carry out scrutiny of the Public Services Board instead of via a standalone Performance Panel - partner representatives who were co-opted on the Panel would be co-opted to the Committee for specific Committee Public Services Board scrutiny sessions;
- The frequency of the Adult Services & Child & Family Services Performance Panels be amended so that both Panels have a 6-weekly cycle – reflecting their equal importance;
- The frequency of the Natural Environment Performance Panel be increased in principle, from quarterly to every two months, subject to agreement of the overall scrutiny work programme – reflecting the growing seriousness of issues around biodiversity and climate change and their importance, as well as recognition of the Council's corporate well-being objective on maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity; and

- Given the delayed start to the 2020/21 municipal year, and the time that should be devoted to work planning, the next scrutiny work programme aims to identify activities to take things up to the end of the current Council term (May 2022) i.e. for the next 18 months.

5.2 Scrutiny Improvement Objectives

5.2.1 The Committee reviewed previously agreed Scrutiny Improvement Objectives and action plan. This included actions to address three Wales Audit Office Proposals for Improvement arising from their review of our scrutiny arrangements in 2018 – meaning a co-ordinated and comprehensive single improvement plan for scrutiny, for the issues that matter most.

WAO Proposals for Improvement

1) The Council should consider the skills and training that scrutiny members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges, and develop and deliver an appropriate training and development programme, including providing additional training on the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
2) The Council should strengthen its evaluation of the impact and outcomes of its scrutiny activity.
3) The Council should further clarify the distinction between scrutiny and Policy Development Committee activity in relation to policy development.

Councillor Improvement Issues

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

---

5.2.2 Delivery of actions has resulted in improvements to the scrutiny process and its effectiveness, and further efforts are being made in a number of areas to support councillors, take practice forward and improve the quality of scrutiny, for example:

1. Councillor Participation

Whilst there is a healthy level of engagement, we want to ensure all scrutiny councillors have opportunity to participate. Opportunities to join Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups were clearly advertised and encouragement given to lead / participate in topics of interest.

Councillor participation in scrutiny is monitored and reported to the Committee every year. Contact with those councillors not actively involved has not thrown up any significant issues that need to be addressed by the Committee. We will however, continue to invite feedback in case there are any barriers to participation that need our attention.

2. Training & Development

Areas for training and development have been identified. However, progress with the development and delivery of a scrutiny training and development programme (as suggested by Wales Audit Office) has been affected because of resources and COVID-19. As the Council moves closer the end of its current term, it was agreed by the Committee that it would be realistic and more timely to defer development of any training and development programme to after the next Council elections.

It is anticipated this would include areas such as: the Scrutiny Process, Chairing Skills; Questioning Skills; Public Participation, as well as improving understanding around the Well-being of Future Generations Act and how scrutiny can support its impact on local services, policies and decision-making. Any planned programme will be refined subject to further feedback / indications from scrutiny councillors.

3. Reporting to Cabinet

Scrutiny Working Groups now have the option to report formally to Cabinet, depending on findings, instead of by letter to Cabinet Member, because of the issues raised and/or wider implications across cabinet portfolios. Working Group outcomes from the discussion on Tourism in May 2019 were reported for the first time as a report to Cabinet instead of letter to relevant Cabinet Member. This is now part of established scrutiny practice. The same applies to Performance Panels if there are any major concerns / recommendations that Panel(s) feel need to be made to Cabinet as a result of their monitoring activities. Cabinet will respond to any such reports in the same fashion as Scrutiny Inquiries with a written

response by relevant Cabinet Member presented to a Cabinet meeting within two months of receipt of report.

4.   Pre-decision Scrutiny

It is part of scrutiny practice that we ask about early opportunities for engagement in cabinet decisions of particular interest to scrutiny. Any correspondence with Cabinet Members about pre-decision scrutiny involves consideration of whether early discussion or sight of proposed report is possible, ahead of report publication by cabinet.

We will routinely ask Cabinet Members about any key future decisions, so that we can consider the involvement of scrutiny.

One example of pre-decision scrutiny over the past year saw discussion in scrutiny prior to the publication of the report by Cabinet (Enterprise Resource Planning System – September 2019), meaning more time to consider and feedback from scrutiny being included in the cabinet agenda. We hope cabinet can facilitate similar opportunity of early engagement for future pre-decision scrutiny activity to give us more time to consider reports and allow our input to be more meaningful.

5.   Scrutiny Impact

It is now part of our scrutiny practice to use existing performance indicators and measureable outcomes, where possible, regarding topics for scrutiny inquiry to help evidence change / difference following scrutiny. The Scrutiny Programme Committee also follows up on Scrutiny Working Group recommendations to assess impact / outcomes and ensures any outstanding issues are followed up with relevant Cabinet Members. In addition, the Scrutiny Annual Report provides clear examples of scrutiny activity and the difference made. We have continued to increase visibility of the impact of scrutiny through regular stories published via our Scrutiny Blog, Newsletter, and Dispatches, as well as in reports to the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

Whilst a survey of stakeholders has been part of established scrutiny practice, we will develop a method of direct post-meeting evaluation from those attending scrutiny meetings (Cabinet Members, officers, external persons etc.) that will help strengthen our evaluation of the impact and outcomes scrutiny activity. We aim to do this by June 2021.

6. *Roles & Responsibilities*

We are mindful to ensure there are no issues of duplication between scrutiny and Policy Development Committee activity or negative impact on the role and work of scrutiny. Policy Development Committee Work Plans are reported to the Scrutiny Programme Committee to ensure awareness and avoidance of any issue of duplication. The Chair of Scrutiny Programme Committee and Scrutiny Performance Panel Conveners receive Policy Development Committee agendas to ensure awareness of their work and work plans. Any issues regarding possible overlap / duplication between roles would be discussed between the Chair of the SPC and relevant Policy Development Committee chair.

The Committee already has a well-established relationship with the Audit Committee to ensure respective work plans are coordinated to avoid duplication or gaps.

7. *Public Engagement*

There are improved links between scrutiny and the Communications Team in pursuit of regular media coverage for scrutiny. Whilst the Scrutiny Team takes direct action to publicise the work of scrutiny, support for press releases and social media is available. Media coverage of scrutiny has increased significantly over the past few years due to active local government reporter, leading to stories in print and on-line media (South Wales Evening Post, Wales Online, and Western Mail).

We continue to post material on-line, promote work via Twitter, and have a monthly public newsletter with a growing number of subscribers, but we aim to develop a specific Facebook page for scrutiny that should improve visibility of the work of scrutiny and sharing of stories, and active public engagement. This will help us to improve public awareness and understanding of the role of scrutiny, specific activities and impact of scrutiny, and enable more interaction.

5.2.3 The Committee was content with progress against scrutiny improvement objectives – noting the small number of outstanding actions. Thought would be given to other improvement objectives for the future and/or new actions that will help deliver already identified objectives.

For further information:

Making the work of scrutiny more transparent and accessible

All scrutiny agenda packs are now available on the Council's '[agenda and minutes' webpage](). There you can also find all scrutiny letters sent to cabinet members following meetings and responses. All scrutiny meetings are open to the public and anyone living or working in Swansea can [suggest a topic for scrutiny](). There are also opportunities to [suggest questions, and submit views](). If you would just like to keep an eye on what's going on we have webpages, a [blog]() and a [newsletter](), you could even [follow us]() on Twitter.

Connect with Scrutiny:

Address: Gloucester Room, Guildhall, Swansea. SA1 4PE (Tel. 01792 637732)
Email: scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
Twitter: @swanseascrutiny
Web: www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutiny
Blog: www.swanseascrutiny.co.uk