

Progress Report – Current Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups

1. Inquiry Panels:

These will undertake in-depth inquiries into specific and significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis, and will be expected to take around six months to complete to enable wide-ranging evidence gathering, and production of a final report with conclusions and recommendations for Cabinet (and other decision-makers).

a) **Procurement** (convener: Cllr Chris Holley)

Key Question: What is the Council doing to ensure it procures locally, ethically, and greenly while being cost effective and transparent in its practices?

Progress Bar:

Planning				Evidence Gathering				Draft Final Report			

The Procurement Pre-Inquiry Working Group originally met on 24 October 2019 for an overview / briefing on the subject matter. This helped Councillors to be informed about how scrutiny can contribute to improvement and the focus, scale and direction of any inquiry. The Panel agreed to undertake an inquiry and the Terms of Reference were agreed. The inquiry work was then placed on hold pending recruitment of Scrutiny Officer / available resources.

The Inquiry Panel will now resume and, given the passage of time and impact of the pandemic, will initially meet to review the key question and terms of reference and amend as necessary. A meeting in May is anticipated.

The inquiry may take up to six months to complete, as it will call for wide ranging evidence, and will lead to a report with conclusions and recommendations that will be presented to Cabinet.

2. Follow Up on Completed Inquiries:

Follow-ups of inquiries will consider both the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and wider impact / difference made. Inquiry Panels are reconvened between 6-12 months after cabinet decision on Inquiry reports.

Inquiry	Cabinet Decision	Recommendations			Follow Up Panel Meeting
		Agreed	Partly	Rejected	
Equalities	21 Nov 2019	18	0	0	28 Jan 2021 Further follow up tba Nov 2021

3. **Performance Panels:**

Performance Panels enable regular and structured in-depth monitoring of performance and challenge within these key areas:

a) **Service Improvement & Finance** (convener: Cllr Chris Holley)

The Panel meets every month. On 17 February the Panel met to discuss the Draft Budget Proposals. The convener provided feedback to Cabinet based on the discussions at the Panel and feedback from other Performance Panels. At the next meeting on 8 March the Panel will receive updates on the Mid-Year Budget Statement, Q3 Budget Monitoring and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement. Scheduled Performance Management reports have this year been unavailable due to the lack of relevant data as a result of the pandemic.

b) **Education** (convener: Cllr Lyndon Jones)

This Panel meets every month. At its meeting in March it will speak to four pupils and the Headteacher from Bishopston Primary School who will give their thoughts on remote and blended learning. They will also receive an update on the Covid impacts in education, look at the pupil development grant spend and receive an update on the current ERW situation.

c) **Adult Services** (convener: Cllr Susan Jones)

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. A progress report appears separately in the agenda as Item No. 8, covering the joint meetings with the Child & Family Services Panel, which has been a temporary arrangement due to the pressures of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It is anticipated that separate Panel meetings will recommence in March 2021.

d) **Child & Family Services** (convener: Cllr Paxton Hood-Williams)

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. See Adult Services above.

e) **Development & Regeneration** (convener: Cllr Jeff Jones)

This Panel meets every two months. Members of this Panel joined in budget discussions at the Service Improvement & Finance Panel meeting on 17 February, which resulted in feedback to Cabinet on 18 February. At the most recent meeting on 3 March, Councillors were joined by the Operations Director and the UK Business Manager for The Ambassador Theatre Group. The Panel heard about progress regarding the Arena venue operator and next steps regarding recruitment and programming. The Panel hope to arrange a site visit prior to expected opening later this year. The Panel also received usual updates regarding the Dashboard Report and on-going projects.

The next panel meeting will be held on 11 May. As well as the usual Dashboard Report updates, it is planned to hear from Russell Greenslade of Swansea BID and Cllr Mark Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment Enhancement & Infrastructure Management, regarding the City Centre Travel Plan.

f) **Natural Environment** (convener: Cllr Peter Jones)

This Panel is scheduled to meet every two months, although there has been some disruption to this schedule during recent months due to pressures on the Council / Officer resources. A Panel meeting will take place on 22 March, enabling the Panel to hear about the work of the Nature Conservation Team and current / future projects. The Panel will also consider how it may wish to contribute to the Council's current public consultation on Climate Change. A further meeting is planned for 28 April to look at Air Quality Management, during which a Research Officer from Swansea University will also contribute to the discussion.

4. **Regional Scrutiny:**

This is collaborative scrutiny with other Local Authorities for topics / issues of shared interest or concern, and models of regional working.

a) **Education Through Regional Working**

The Scrutiny Councillor Group met remotely on 1 March 2021. They met with the Lead Director and the ERW Chief Officers to discuss the effects of Covid on the business of ERW and progress with ERW reform programme. They also discussed the items presented at the ERW Joint Committee on the 9 February. The next meeting will take place in June 2021.

b) **Swansea Bay City Region City**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee met on 2 February to continue City Deal programme monitoring. There was specific discussion on the Life Science & Well-being Campuses Project, Pentre Awel Project, as well as update on City Deal funding / finances. The Committee is expected to meet again on 25 May 2021.

5. **Working Groups:**

A number of new topics have been identified which will be dealt with through one-off Working Groups. These enable a 'light-touch' approach to specific topics of concern and will be planned as a one-off meeting (in the order shown below) primarily involving discussion with relevant cabinet member(s) / officer(s), and any other persons called, to gather information, ask questions, and give views / raise any concerns.

a) **Workforce** (convener: Cllr Cyril Anderson)

This Working Group will meet on 29 March 2021 to enable information, questions and discussion on how the Council supports health & well-being of staff; issues around home working; staff sickness; staff turnover; use of agency staff and pressures.

b) **Digital Inclusion** (convener: Cllr Lesley Walton)

This Working Group will meet on the 11 May. This will enable information, questions and discussion, following up on previous scrutiny discussion around digital transformation, the Council's digital inclusion strategy, and how well prepared both the Council and the public is to use and communicate / engage with increasing dependency on digital technology and interaction, to avoid exclusion / poor access.

c) **Bus Services** (convener: Cllr Lyndon Jones)

This will enable information, questions and discussion about bus network coverage and levels of service; community transport provision; integration with other forms of transport, etc.

d) **Healthy City** (convener: Cllr Mary Jones)

This will enable information, questions and discussion on Swansea as a healthy city, exploring in particular the provision, and promotion of, outdoor sport and activities and opportunities for young people, etc.

Reserve List:

- Road Safety
- Active Travel
- Accessibility for the Disabled / Elderly