



Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 13 April 2021

Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/22

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Purpose | This report presents the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/22, which the Committee is responsible for monitoring. |
| Content | The agreed work programme is attached, which shows the topics that will be examined by scrutiny through various Panels and Working Groups. A plan for future Committee meetings is also attached. Progress against the agreed work programme is shown. |
| Councillors are being asked to | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• plan for the committee meetings ahead• consider opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny• review the scrutiny work programme (including progress of current Panels and Working Groups) |
| 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 The Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing the Council's scrutiny work programme, and managing the overall work of scrutiny to ensure that it is as effective as possible.
- 1.2 A report is provided to each meeting to enable the Committee to maintain an overview of agreed scrutiny activities, monitor progress, and coordinate work as necessary.
- 1.3 The broad aim of the scrutiny function is to engage non-executive councillors in activities to:

- provide an effective challenge to the executive
 - help improve services, policies, and performance
 - engage the public in its work
- 1.4 The 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.

It also needs to be:

- manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available to support activities
 - relevant to council priorities
 - adding value and having maximum impact
 - coordinated and avoids duplication
- 1.5 The work of scrutiny is undertaken primarily in three ways – through the Committee itself, by establishing informal Panels (for in-depth activities) or via one-off Working Groups. Panels and Working Groups would be open to all non-executive councillors - the Committee will determine membership and conveners following expressions of interest.
- 1.6 Scrutiny will regularly send letters to Cabinet Members communicating findings, views and recommendations for improvement and, where appropriate, by producing reports. Inquiry panels will always produce a final report at the end of the inquiry with conclusions and recommendations for Cabinet (and other decision-makers), informed by the evidence gathered. Inquiry panels will reconvene to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations and the impact of their work – usually 6-12 months following cabinet decision.
- 1.7 Although much of the work of scrutiny is carried out by informal Panels and Working Groups these meetings are accessible to the public. Agendas, reports and letters relating to all such scrutiny activities are published, in the same manner as the committee, on the Council's modern.gov online platform:
<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

2. Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/22

- 2.1.1 The agreed Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/22 is set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.1.2. The following paragraphs break down the work programme by specific ways of working to provide a brief overview.

2.2 Scrutiny Programme Committee:

- 2.2.1 The Committee's own work plan is attached as **Appendix 2**. This should be kept under review to ensure it represents a robust, manageable, and effective plan. The Committee plan covers a broad range of policy and service topics and aims to ensure coverage of scrutiny across all cabinet portfolios and address any gaps in the overall work programme. The Committee is also the designated Committee for scrutiny of the Public Services Board, and Crime & Disorder Scrutiny.
- 2.2.2 Committee members should review and confirm items for the next and future meetings giving specific consideration to who should attend so that meetings are always well planned and prepared for, e.g. information required and key questions that the Committee wishes to ask.
- 2.2.3 The main item(s) scheduled for the next Committee meeting on 18 May are:
- Crime & Disorder Scrutiny (Safer Swansea Partnership) - Joint Chairs of Safer Swansea Partnership will attend to provide information and take questions on the performance of the Partnership to enable committee to explore plans / objectives, achievements, impact, challenges etc.
- 2.2.4 The Committee will have the opportunity to review priorities and introduce issues of concern as and when they arise, e.g. pre-decision scrutiny or call-in which may require extra meetings.
- 2.2.5 Whilst the initial set of Committee meeting dates, and possible topics, for 2021/22 are shown in Appendix 2 the Committee work plan for the whole of the new municipal year is being developed for agreement. A draft Committee work plan for 2021/22 will be presented to the Committee in due course.
- 2.2.6 Pre-decision scrutiny – this is carried out by the Committee unless delegated elsewhere. The Committee is invited to consider the available information on future cabinet business and any opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny, taking into account strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications (see Cabinet Forward Plan attached as **Appendix 3**). Any requests will require discussion with relevant cabinet member(s) to confirm timescales and window of opportunity for scrutiny involvement. Pre-decision scrutiny enables scrutiny to develop understanding about and ask questions on proposed Cabinet reports to provide 'critical friend' challenge and influence decision-making. The future cabinet report on 'Business Case for the Relocation of the Civic Centre' has already been identified for pre-decision scrutiny and will be scheduled for Committee discussion in accordance with cabinet decision-making timetable.

2.3 Inquiry Panels:

- 2.3.1 Once membership and a convener have been appointed the first task of an Inquiry Panel will be to have a briefing on the issue and then determine the key question and terms of reference for the inquiry. Once the planning stage is complete, the inquiry will be evidence gathering, with the last stage being to develop the final report.

| In Progress / Planned | Completed (follow up stage) |
|--|--|
| 1. Procurement (initial meeting of re-convened Panel to be arranged – planned for 24 June 2021) | 1. Equalities (followed up 28 Jan & further follow up tba Nov 2021) |

2.4 Performance Panels:

- 2.4.1 The following Performance Panels, which will enable regular and structured monitoring of performance within these key areas, have been agreed and will meet on an ongoing basis until otherwise agreed by the Committee (frequency of meetings in brackets):

| Performance Panel | Convener |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1. Service Improvement & Finance (monthly) | Cllr. Chris Holley |
| 2. Education (monthly) | Cllr. Lyndon Jones |
| 3. Adult Services (every six weeks) | Cllr. Susan Jones |
| 4. Child & Family Services (every six weeks) | Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams |
| 5. Development & Regeneration (every two months) | Cllr. Jeff Jones |
| 6. Natural Environment (every two months) | Cllr. Peter Jones |

- 2.4.2 Performance Panel conveners are scheduled to provide a regular update to the Committee to enable discussion on key activities and impact.

- 2.4.3 The Committee is aware that current COVID-19 pressures on the Council have impacted on Panel meetings, and adjustments will continue to be made to Panel work plans as necessary to reduce burden and alleviate pressures on the organisation at this time as it deals with the pandemic.

2.5 Working Groups:

- 2.5.1 The following Working Groups will be convened during the year ahead, in the order shown:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Workforce (29 March) | 3. Bus Services |
| 2. Digital Inclusion (11 May) | 4. Healthy City |

2.6 Regional Scrutiny:

2.6.1 **Education Through Regional Working** - Swansea scrutiny is involved in an informal regional scrutiny arrangement with the six councils participating in the 'Education Through Regional Working' (ERW) school improvement consortium. A Scrutiny Councillor Group has been in existence since 2016 in order to provide challenge to ERW, coordinate scrutiny work across the region and ensure a consistent approach. The Swansea Scrutiny Team is providing support for this group as the Council's contribution to ERW via Service Level Agreement. Swansea is represented by the chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee and convener of the Education Performance Panel.

2.6.2 **Swansea Bay City Region City Deal** – Swansea scrutiny is also involved in the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee established during 2018/19. This formal arrangement involves three councillor representatives from each of the four Councils involved in the City Deal, meeting to scrutinise the work of the Joint Committee responsible for delivering the City Deal programme. As per Joint Committee Agreement, the Joint Scrutiny Committee is serviced by Neath Port Talbot Council.

3. **Monitoring the Work Programme**

3.1 The Committee is responsible for monitoring progress against the agreed work programme and this includes work undertaken by the informal Panels and Working Groups and findings, to ensure that this work is effective and has the required visibility.

3.2 **Appendix 4a** provides a timetable of all scrutiny activities (projected or actual where dates are known). Lead councillors and officers are also noted within.

3.3 **Appendix 4b** provides a snapshot of progress with all of the Panels and Working Groups established by the Committee and their current position.

3.4 The work programme is kept under constant review by the Committee, with changes made as necessary. The Committee will always retain the flexibility to adapt and re-prioritise the work of scrutiny, to ensure the continued relevance of the programme.

4. **Public Requests for Scrutiny / Councillor Calls for Action**

4.1 None.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Any costs that arise out of work plan activities, for example expenses for witnesses or transport costs, are not envisaged to be significant and will be contained within the existing Scrutiny Budget.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Agreed Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/22

Appendix 2: Scrutiny Programme Committee Work Plan 2020/22

Appendix 3: Cabinet Forward Plan

Appendix 4a: Scrutiny Work Programme – Projected Timetable of Activity

Appendix 4b: Progress Report – Current Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups