

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			

On the 16 August the Panel met to discuss Procurement in the Place Directorate. The Panel will continue their meetings with individual Council Departments with Social Services on the 13 September and Education and the Corporate Centre on the 27 September.

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: 2 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)

This Panel meets every month. The Panel last met on 23 June to discuss the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report. At this meeting, the Panel also received an overview regarding current Byelaws and the process involved in revocation.

The Panel are next due to meet on 20 September to discuss the Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 and to receive an update regarding Peer Review & Self-Assessment (Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021).

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

This Panel meets every month. Estyn is coming to the next Panel meeting on the 1 September to discuss the new Estyn Regime and Thematic Reviews. The Panel will also be updated on the current position with the Education Covid Recovery Plan and the New Regional Education Partnership as the new school year begins.

On the 30 September the Panel will look at how we are improving schools in Swansea by speaking to the lead School Improvement Adviser/s.

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

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. A progress report appears separately under Agenda Item 7.

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

This Panel meets every 6 weeks. The Panel last met on 11 August and discussed the latest Performance Monitoring report, received a briefing on the CIW Assurance Visit final report in relation to Child and Family Services and was briefed on the outcomes from the Ty Nant CIW inspection.

At its next meeting on 21 September the Panel will discuss progress on the Child and Family Improvement Programme, receive an update on the Corporate Parenting Board and an update on Child Disability Services.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel met on 1 July to discuss the monitoring Dashboard Report and updates across all major projects.

At the next meeting on 7 September, the Panel will receive a presentation from Swansea University in relation to their involvement with the City Deal investment projects.

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

This Panel meets every two months. The Panel last met on 26 August to discuss Council Management of Ash Dieback. The Panel heard about current strategies and approaches to the management of this disease, relating to council-owned land.

The Panel will next meet on 6 October to receive updates regarding Local Flood Risk Management and Water Pollution policies.

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 for the last time in its current form on the 28 June 2021. They met with the Lead Director and the ERW Chief Officers to discuss ERW and the move to the new Education Regional Partnership. They also discussed progress with the Business Plan and how they would like to see Scrutiny operate under the new Partnership.

The new South West Wales Education Partnership will commence shortly, and will include Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. The Governance Structure for the new body is currently being finalised and will go to each of the three Councils for discussion in autumn. The new scrutiny arrangement will form part of this Governance Structure.

b) **Swansea Bay City Region City**

The Joint Scrutiny Committee continues to monitor the City Deal programme. The Committee met on 20 July and considered the Swansea Bay City Deal Annual Report. There was also specific discussion on: Skills & Talent Business Case, Swansea Bay City Deal Change Control Procedure, Benefits Realisation - Benefits Profiles, as well as overall programme and financial monitoring. The next meeting is planned for 27 September with focus on: Pentre Awel Project, Digital Infrastructure.

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 met on 29 March 2021 and asked about the impact of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of staff; how the Council is supporting this; issues around home working; staff sickness; staff turnover; use of agency staff and pressures. A range of information was considered by the Working Group, with input from relevant Cabinet Member(s) and officer(s). A letter with the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations was sent to the relevant Cabinet Members and this letter together with the Cabinet Members response was reported to the Committee in June.

With the Committee's agreement, the Working Group will meet again in the next six months in order to revisit the topic and consider the latest position, information and experience including the results of the further staff survey that will be carried out by the Council in the coming months.

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

This Working Group met on the 11 May where they congratulated officers for the good work done so far in relation this, especially through the difficult Covid period. Overall the Working Group were of the view that the Council is on the right track with its Digital Inclusion Strategy and do recognise that the Council is keen to make the right improvements moving forward. The Digital Inclusion Framework/Strategy and the Council Website is currently being reviewed and members of the Working Group asked to be included in this process. The letter from the Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Business Improvement & Performance was reported to the Committee in June.

The Working Group felt that further oversight of work on Digital Inclusion is necessary as things develop, perhaps annually, whether through Working Group or other method of scrutiny. This will be factored into future work planning discussion.

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

This Working Group met on 7 July when a range of information was considered, including bus network coverage and levels of service, community transport provision and integration with other forms of transport. Relevant Cabinet Member and officers participated in the meeting together with representatives of First Cymru and Cardiff Bus.

A letter with the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations was sent to the relevant Cabinet Member and this letter together with the Cabinet Members response appears within the Committee agenda under Item 11 – Scrutiny Letters.

d) **Healthy City** (convener: Cllr TBC)

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 Working Group List:

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