



Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

DRAFT



Contents

1.	Chair’s Foreword	1
2.	Swansea Scrutiny Results Scorecard 2021/22	3
3.	About the Indicators	4
3.a	How much scrutiny did we carry out?	4
3.b	How well did we do?	8
3.c	How did scrutiny impact on the business of the Council?	12
3.d	What were the outcomes of scrutiny?	18
4.	Impact	21
4.1	How Scrutiny Councillors have made a difference	21
5.	Feedback and Improvement	23
5.1	Improving scrutiny	23
5.2	Scrutiny Improvement Objectives	25
	For further information	27

Appendices:

- 1 - Scrutiny Dispatches Impact Reports 2021/22
- 2 - The Work of Scrutiny 2017-22

1. Chair's Foreword

Councillor Peter Black, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee



I am proud to present the Scrutiny Annual Report, reflecting on the final year of the 2017-2022 Council term, as Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee. This report covers the work of scrutiny between May 2021 and May 2022.

We continued with delivering the eighteen-month Scrutiny Work Programme agreed in October 2020 and covered most of the areas of focus, although implications from the continuing pandemic and impact on resources did affect some plans. Scrutiny activity has continued to be responsive and flexible taking into account the pressures on the organisation.

Scrutiny is a vital part of local democracy and good governance. The work covered by this report ensures the Council remains accountable and transparent, effective and efficient. Questioning and providing challenge to decision-makers also helps the Council to achieve its objectives and drive improvement. We appreciate the engagement of Cabinet Members in scrutiny and Officers for their support. Our report focuses on how scrutiny has made a difference in Swansea, and our efforts to support continuous improvement and good practice.

Measuring the performance of scrutiny in a meaningful way can be challenging, however we have taken a 'results based' approach to tell you about:

- How much scrutiny we carried out
- How well we did it
- How scrutiny impacted on the business of the Council
- What the outcomes of scrutiny were

However, please note that comparison with the previous year, which was untypically short, is not meaningful.

We hope that each Annual Report provides you with assurance and confidence that councillors involved in scrutiny are contributing to better services, policies and decision making in Swansea.

Being the last year of a Council term, we've also provided a summary of the work carried out over the past five years showing the main topics that have been examined by scrutiny during that time.

Finally, I would like to give my thanks to all of the councillors who have contributed over the past year, in particular those who have led on scrutiny activity. We look forward to the new Council term, welcoming new councillors and encouraging their involvement in scrutiny.



Councillor Peter Black

DRAFT

2. Swansea Scrutiny Results Scorecard 2021/22

Scrutiny Practice	A. How much scrutiny did we carry out?	B. How well did we do?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of Committee meetings = 10 ↑ (7) 2. Number of Panel & Working Group meetings = 56 ↑ (31) 3. Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 1 ↑ (0) 4. Number of Working Group topics completed = 2 ↔ (2) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 78% ↓ (86%) 6. Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 70% ↑ (66%) 7. Meetings with public observers = 17% ↓ (24%) 8. Meetings with public input = 17% ↑ (13%) 9. Meetings attracting media coverage = 29% ↓ (32%)
Scrutiny Outcomes	C. How did scrutiny impact on the business of the Council?	D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Number of Chairs' Letters sent to Cabinet Members = 66 ↑ (46) 11. Average time for Cabinet Member response letter = 18 days ↓ (24) 12. Letters responded to within 21 day target = 71% ↑ (52%) 13. Number of scrutiny reports to Cabinet = 0 ↔ (0) 14. Cabinet action plans agreed = 0 ↔ (0) 15. Follow ups undertaken = 1 ↔ (1) 16. Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre decision scrutiny = 4 ↑ (3) 17. Number of Cabinet reports subject to Call-in = 0 ↔ (0) 18. Cabinet Members who attended at least one Scrutiny meeting = 100% ↔ (100%) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = n/a (n/a) 20. Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 39% (n/a)

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

3. About the Indicators

A. How much scrutiny did we carry out?

3.1 Number of Committee meetings = 10

The Council has a single overarching Scrutiny Committee, called the Scrutiny Programme Committee, which is scheduled to meet every 4 weeks, with extra meetings added as necessary. During 2021/22 the Committee met 10 times (not including the meeting following Council Annual General Meeting to elect the Committee chair/vice-chair).

The Committee is responsible for developing and managing the overall Scrutiny Work Programme. Overarching priorities were shaped by the work planning conference which took place in October 2020 (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.

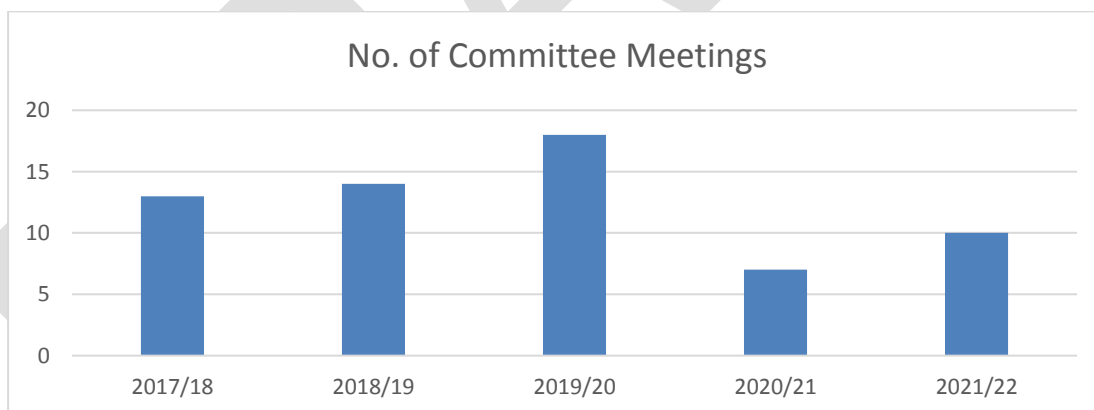
In November 2020, because of the short 2020/21 municipal year, the Committee agreed a work programme that would cover eighteen months, rather than a year, i.e., until the end of the 2017-22 Council term. Specific scrutiny activities included in the work programme are carried out either by the Committee or by establishing informal Panels and Working Groups. All meetings are held in public.

Formal Committee meetings gave councillors the opportunity to hold Cabinet Members to account and provide challenge on a range of policy and service issues of concern, relevant to their portfolio responsibilities, and its work addressed any gaps in the scrutiny work programme to ensure good coverage of scrutiny across all Cabinet portfolios. The Committee is also the Council's designated Committee for statutory scrutiny of Swansea Public Services Board, and Crime & Disorder Scrutiny of the Safer Swansea Community Safety Partnership.

The following topics were also examined by the Committee:

- Recovery & Transformation Plan
- Brexit and the wider 'Levelling Up' Agenda
- The City Centre
- Delivering the Swansea Bay City Deal - Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth Programme
- Swansea Bay and West Wales Metro Programme.
- Highways and Engineering
- Infrastructure Repairs and Maintenance
- Tourism, Destination Management, and Marketing
- Business and City Promotion
- Energy Policy (incl. Generation, Supply & District Heating)
- Litter and Community Cleansing
- Parking Policy, Control & Enforcement
- Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report
- Delivery of Corporate Priority – Tackling Poverty
- Follow Up on Tourism Scrutiny Working Group Recommendations
- Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2020/21

Comparison with previous years:



3.2 Number of Panel & Working Group meetings = 56

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, usually around six months, and will 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.

Topics examined	Convener	Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	Final report presented to Cabinet on 16 June 2022

See para. 3.15 for previous inquiries followed up

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

Performance Panels 2021/22	Convener
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Improvement & Finance (monthly) Education (monthly) Adult Services (6-weekly) Child & Family Services (6-weekly) Development & Regeneration (every two months) Natural Environment (every two months) 	Cllr. Chris Holley Cllr. Lyndon Jones Cllr. Sue Jones Cllr. Paxton Hood-Williams Cllr. Jeff Jones Cllr. Peter Jones

Performance Panels are expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant cabinet members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, about services. Performance Panels will hold relevant Cabinet Members to account with clear opportunities for questioning, to explore their work, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact. Performance Panel conveners provide a regular update to the Committee to enable discussion on key activities and impact.

Working Groups are one-off meetings established to enable a 'light-touch' approach to specific topics of concern, to consider a specific report or information, resulting in a letter to the relevant

Cabinet Member(s) or report to Cabinet with views and recommendations.

Four one-off Working Groups were included in the work programme, to be completed as time and resources allow. The following Working Group meetings were held during 2021/22:

Working Groups	Convener
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workforce• Bus Services	Cllr Cyril Anderson Cllr Lyndon Jones

3.3 Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 1

The Procurement Inquiry which was originally delayed during 2020/21 was re-convened at the start of the 2021/22 municipal year and completed in March 2022.

3.4 Number of Working Group topics completed = 2

Work on the following topic(s) was completed through meetings of Working Groups:

- Workforce

Original meeting held in March 2021 with agreement to hold a further meeting. This was held in February 2022, completing this Working Group.

- Bus Services

Meeting held in July 2021 with agreement to hold follow up meeting to enable follow up on the Group's recommendations and see what changes / improvements had been made. Meeting held in March 2022 to complete this work.

NOTE: There are also regional scrutiny arrangements that Swansea is involved in, which have enabled scrutiny councillors to look at the work of:

- Education Through Regional Working (ERW) and consider the development of the new regional School Improvement Consortia, Partneriaeth, through a Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group.
- Delivery of the Swansea Bay City Deal programme, through the Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee.

B. How well did we do?

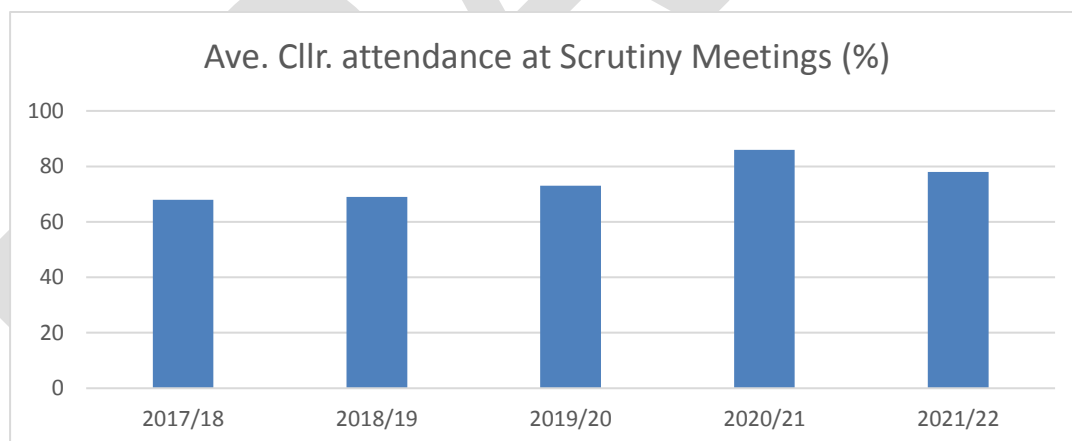
3.5 Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 78%

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 and was 78%. Attendance at the Committee meetings was 85%. Both healthy figures of engagement.

Comparison with previous years:

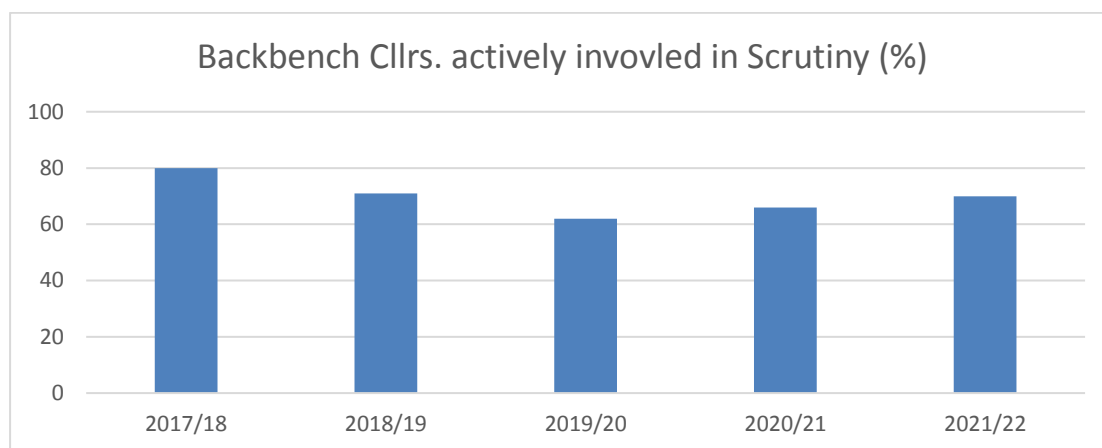


3.6 Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 70%

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:



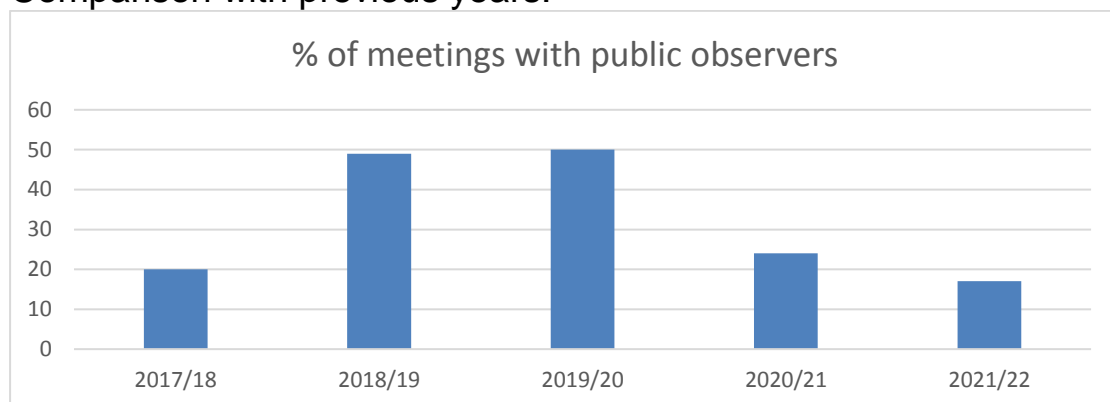
3.7 Meetings with public observers = 17%

Scrutiny is important as a mechanism for community engagement. The extent to which the public observes meetings may indicate whether there is a significant focus of scrutiny on matters of public interest. 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. With the move to remote meetings over the past two years, people are now able to watch video recordings of meetings, which has impacted on the number of observers watching live. 11 of the 66 scrutiny meetings held were observed by members of the public who joined the remote meeting on request or in order to ask a question.

Committee meetings were live-streamed, however Panel / Working Group meetings were not. However all meetings were recorded, with video subsequently published on the Council's website / YouTube account for viewing. The move to remote meetings during the pandemic has affected our ability to report accurately on the number of public observers, other than those we know to have been specifically invited into meetings. A scan of YouTube views, however, shows Committee meetings seem to attract on average 40 viewers, significantly more people than who would have watched meetings pre-COVID from the public gallery. There are similarly good figures across other scrutiny meetings, with Development &

Regeneration Performance Panel meetings appearing to attract the biggest interest.

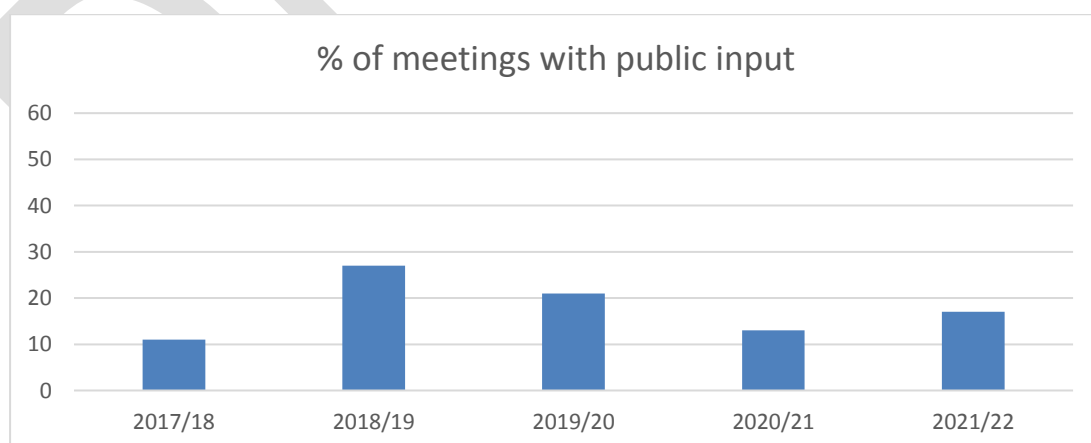
Comparison with previous years:



3.8 Meetings with public input = 17%

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. 17% 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:

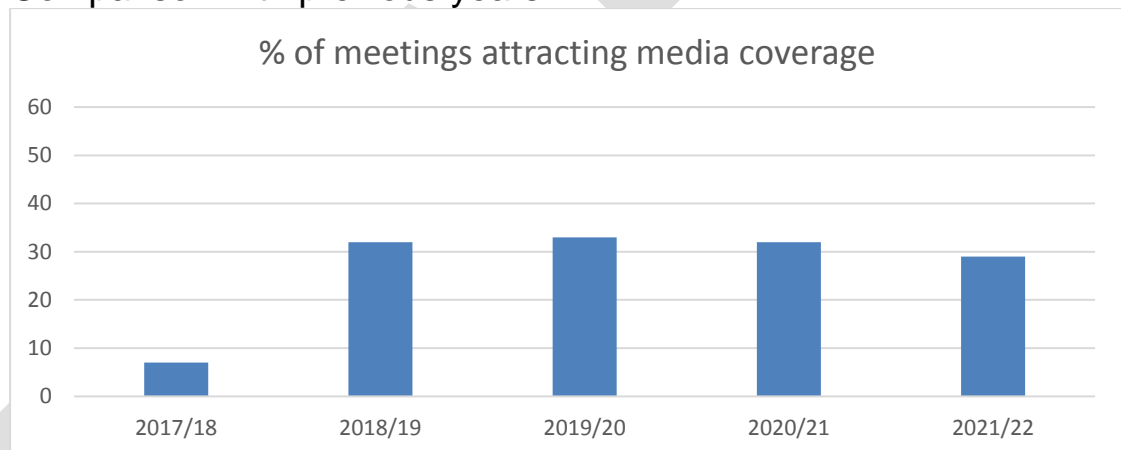


3.9 Meetings attracting media coverage = 29%

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 almost a third of scrutiny meetings made the news, e.g. in print in the South Wales Evening Post or Western Mail, and/or on websites including WalesOnline, BBC etc. Across all activities there were at least 21 scrutiny discussions reported in the local press (print and on-line).

Issues which generated coverage included scrutiny discussion on: looked after children; residential social care; trees (ash dieback); City Deal; developments, including Tidal Lagoon plans, pollution control; tackling poverty; parking services; recycling & waste; potholes, violence against women, complaints performance, and pupils educated other than at school.

Comparison with previous years:

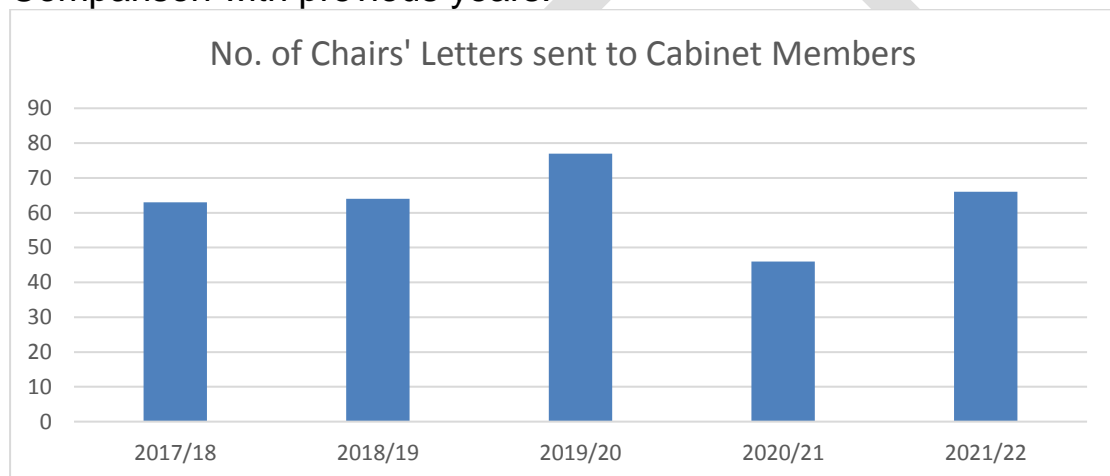


C. How did scrutiny impact on the business of the Council?

3.10 Number of Chairs' Letters sent to Cabinet Members = 66

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. 66 letters were sent to Cabinet Members.

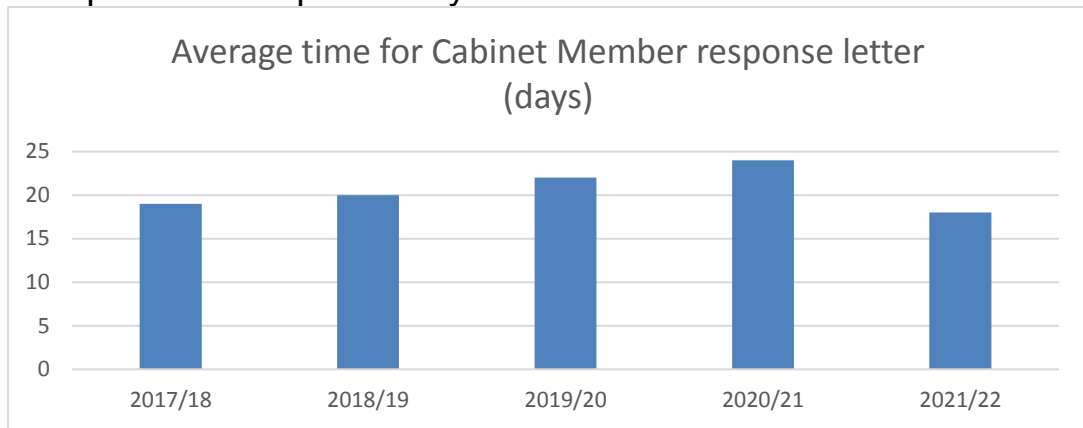
Comparison with previous years:



3.11 Average time for Cabinet Member response letter = 18 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 18 days, which is a significant improvement on the 24 days taken in 2020/21, and indicates that scrutiny is getting a timely response to views, concerns, and any suggested action for Cabinet Members.

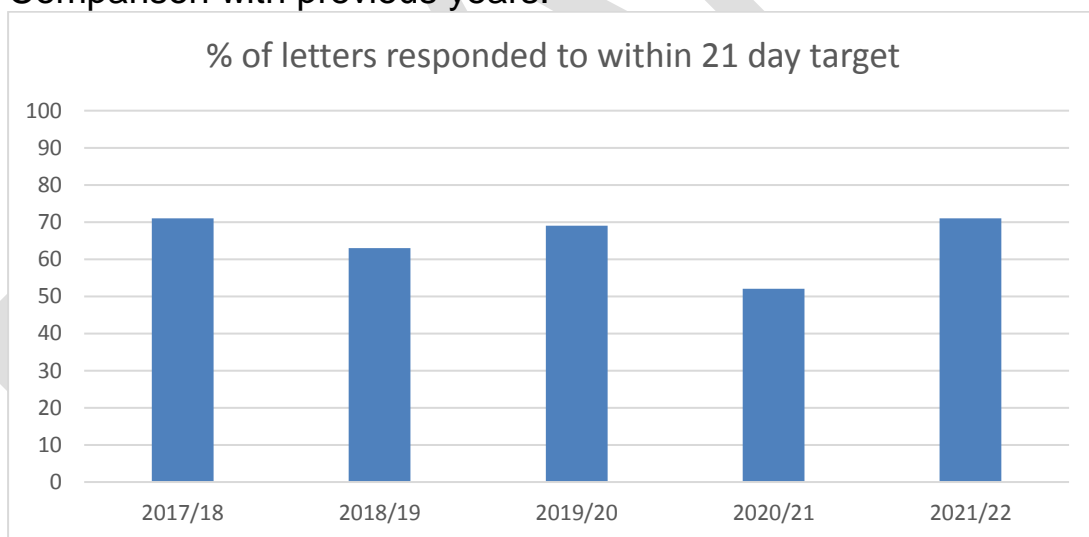
Comparison with previous years:



3.12 Letters responded to within 21 day target = 71%

Whilst the response to scrutiny letters was on average 18 days, some did take longer. The number of letters responded to within the 21 day target was 71% (17 out of 24 letters), again a significant improvement on previous.

Comparison with previous years:

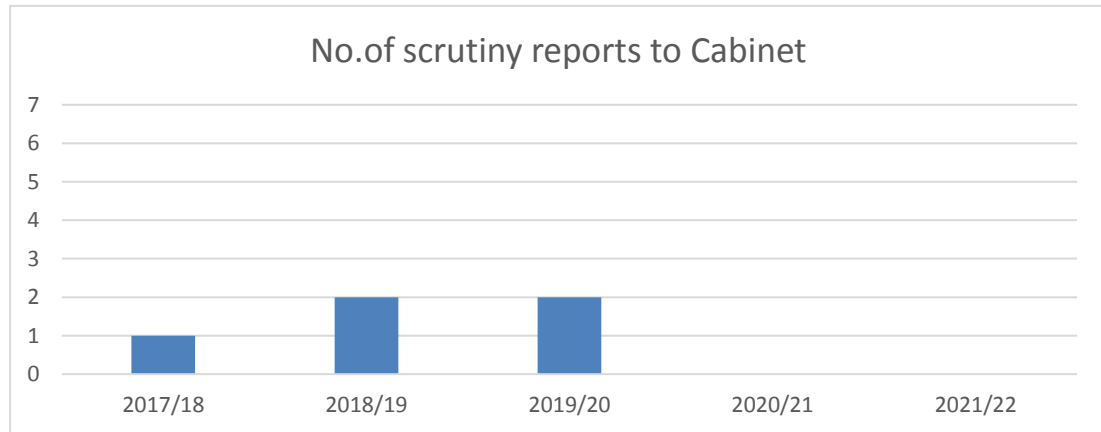


3.13 Number of Scrutiny reports to Cabinet = 0

In-depth inquiries are reported to Cabinet for a response to the recommendations agreed by scrutiny and its 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. There were no inquiry reports presented to Cabinet

during 2020/21, however see para. 3.16 for pre-decision scrutiny feedback reports to Cabinet.

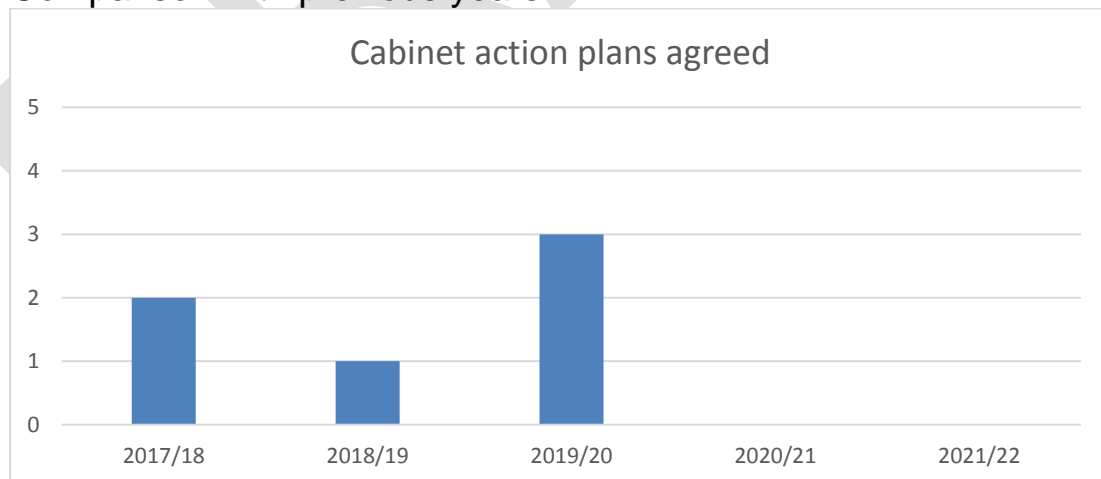
Comparison with previous years:



3.14 Cabinet action plans agreed = 0

Once recommendations and an action plan have been agreed by Cabinet, scrutiny will follow up on progress with implementation and impact. 2021/22 did not feature any action plans being published and agreed by Cabinet, but the Procurement Scrutiny Inquiry progressed during 2021/22, reporting to Cabinet early in the new 2022/23 municipal year.

Comparison with previous years:



3.15 Follow ups undertaken = 1

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

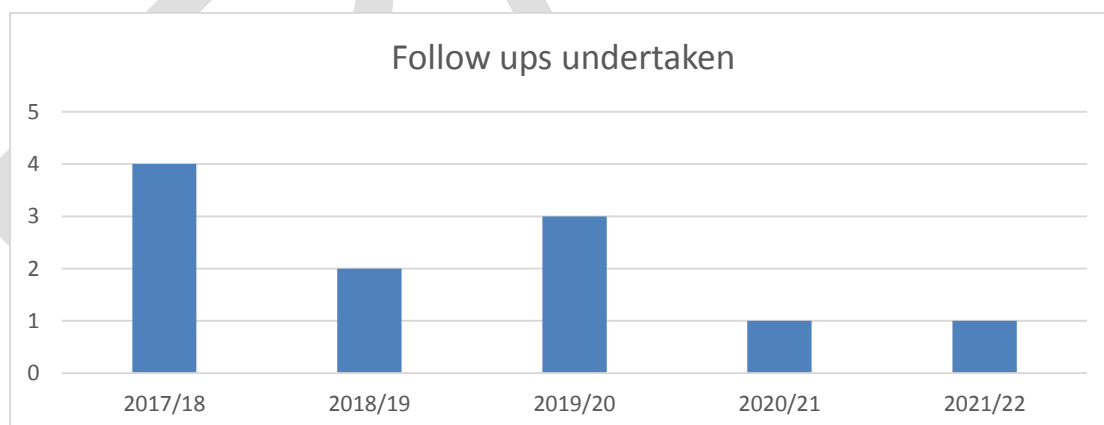
following Cabinet decision, with a further follow up arranged if required.

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. Previous scrutiny inquiries that required a follow up were followed up:

Inquiry	Convener	Cabinet Action Plan agreed	Monitoring Status
Equalities Key Question: How effectively is the Council meeting and embedding the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Duty for Wales)?	Cllr. Lyndon Jones	November 2019	Complete - second follow up meeting held Jan 2022

The Scrutiny Programme Committee will, ordinarily, follow up any Working Group reports to Cabinet.

Comparison with previous years:



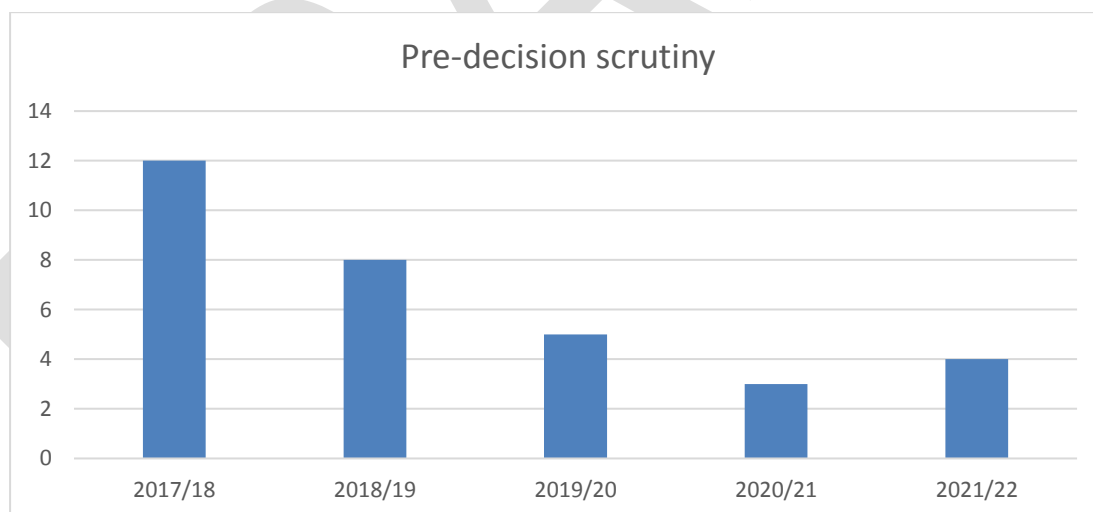
3.16 Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre-decision scrutiny = 4

Pre-decision scrutiny involves scrutiny councillors considering Cabinet reports before Cabinet makes a final decision. Considering strategic impact, public interest, and financial implications, the following three 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
Update Management Report on Swansea Airport	Delivery & Operations	16 Nov 2021	Service Improvement & Finance Panel
Leasehold Acquisition and Redevelopment FPR7 – 279 Oxford Street/25-27 Princess Way	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	14 Dec 2021	Committee
Covid Recovery and Investment	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	18 Jan 2022	Committee
Annual Budget	Economy & Strategy (Leader)	15 Feb 2022	Service Improvement & Finance Panel (with contribution from other Panels)

Comparison with previous years:



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 Scrutiny meeting – 100%

Cabinet Members attend scrutiny meetings to answer questions and provide information to assist scrutiny and account for their work. Cabinet attendance at scrutiny meetings is a good indicator that the 'holding to account' role of scrutiny is functioning well. It ensures that scrutiny provides regular challenge to decision-makers.

to explore the work of Cabinet Members, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact. Aside from a regular Q & A session with the Leader of the Council, there is targeted approach within the Committee, calling in Cabinet Members as and when required to report on specific portfolio responsibilities and issues, with emphasis on Performance Panels to hold relevant Cabinet Members to account with clear opportunities for questioning. All Cabinet Members were engaged with scrutiny, whether with the Committee, Panel or Working Group, over the last year. The range of issues discussed within the Committee alone involved six Cabinet Members.

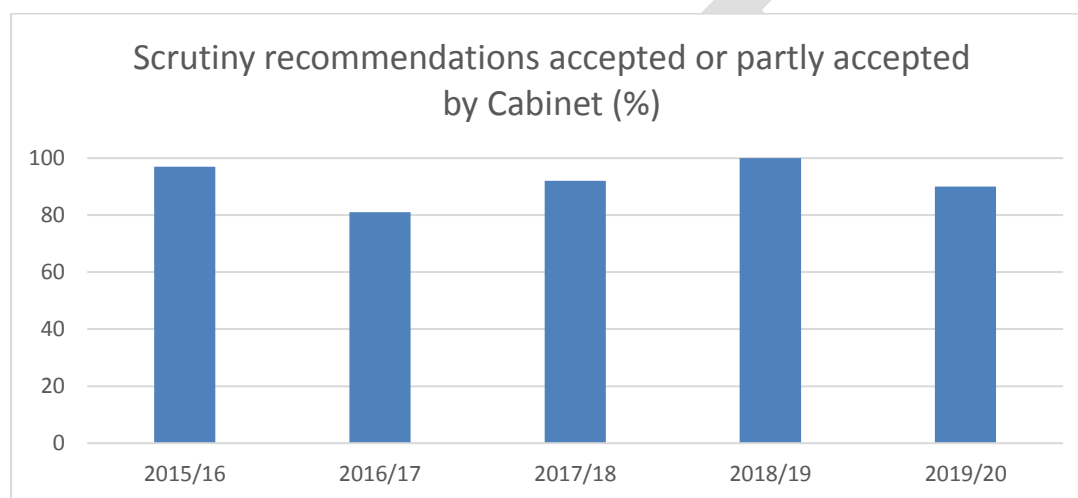
Although there are 10 Cabinet Portfolios, during 2021/22 there were 11 councillors in Cabinet positions. The Supporting Communities portfolio operating under a job share system between two councillors sharing the responsibilities. Our target is always 100%.

D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?

3.19 Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = n/a

The rate that Cabinet accept scrutiny recommendations is a good indicator of whether scrutiny is making strong recommendations based on robust evidence. We cannot report on this for 2021/22 as there were no outstanding scrutiny reports to Cabinet requiring a formal response. The same applied to 2020/21.

Comparison with previous years:



3.20 Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 39%

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 agreed 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 indicator would represent the percentage of recommendations accepted by scrutiny as being completed for the year.

The Equalities Inquiry, which made 18 recommendations, was formally responded to by Cabinet in November 2019 and was followed up by the Panel in January 2021. Although some notable progress was reported, such as the creation of the new Strategic Equality and Future Generations Board, which will take forward

actions and recommendations within the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and the Scrutiny Inquiry, and associated support to drive improvement, the pandemic had impacted on the Council's ability to focus on this work. The Panel agreed that there has been positive progress with the recommendations and work done so far should provide a good foundation for moving forward in the medium and longer term. The Panel agreed to meet again for a second follow up to look in more detail at the progress made and impact of the inquiry, when a full assessment of the implementation of scrutiny recommendations and agreed Cabinet action plan will be made. The Inquiry Panel met in January 2022 and following discussion concluded formal monitoring of the inquiry recommendations and impact.

The Panel were happy with the progress made to date and were pleased with the positive impact that the inquiry, and the commitment to it by the Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities and officers, has made in helping to move this important agenda forward in Swansea. They heard for example that a new Strategic Equality Plan had been developed and published, a new Strategic Equality and Future Generation Board had been created, the Council's website has been updated and the mandatory equalities training refreshed, amongst other things.

The Panel recognised the Covid-19 pandemic continues to bring challenges to the Council and that many officers have had to shift focus to ensure that Council services were maintained and those most vulnerable were supported during the crisis. The Panel were pleased to see the huge amount of work completed throughout that time, with and for, our local communities.

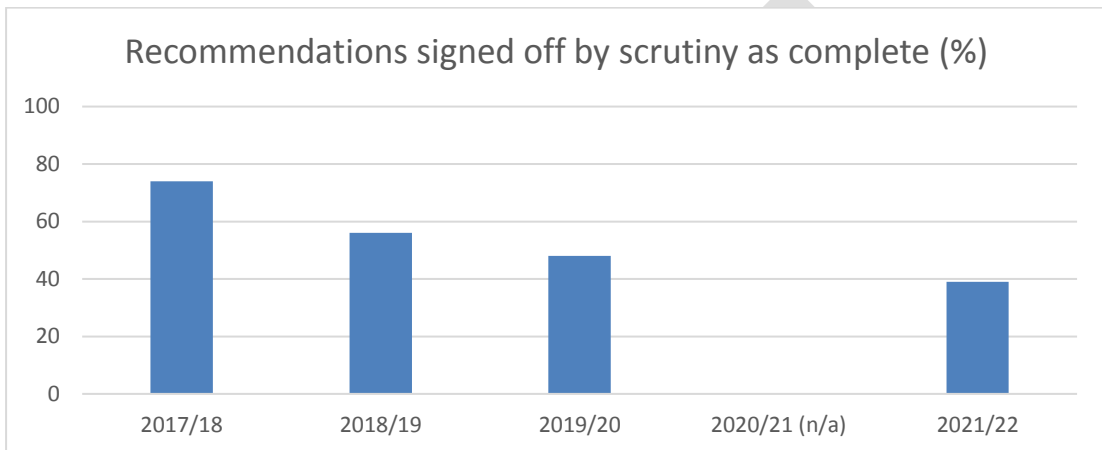
The Panel agreed to finish their formal follow up involvement with the inquiry after satisfying themselves that good progress has been made with all the recommendations. They heard that seven of the recommendations are now complete and that good progress has been made with those recommendations that are outstanding. They were reassured to hear that all the necessary pieces are in place to ensure ongoing improvement in those areas where the recommendations are incomplete.

The Panel decided to refer one area to the Scrutiny Programme Committee for potential follow up in the new municipal year. This

related to Recommendation 13 - Build upon the development of a Co-production Strategy with inclusion of a Toolkit for use by staff across the authority.

It should be noted that in many cases implementation of scrutiny recommendations continues beyond the process of formal monitoring.

Comparison with previous years:



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 summary of the headlines from the work of scrutiny for Council and the public, which focuses 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:

- **Focussing on the importance of efficient bus services in Swansea** (*Bus Services Working Group*)
- **Holding Cabinet Members to account** (*Scrutiny Programme Committee*)
- **Continuing to monitor council performance in relation to the natural environment** (*Natural Environment Performance Panel*)
- **Evidence gathering for in-depth reviews** (*Procurement Scrutiny Inquiry*)
- **Contributing to future arrangements for regional education scrutiny** (*reference to Education Through Regional Working Scrutiny Councillor Group and transition to new partnership arrangements and establishment of Partneriaeth*)
- **Making sure Safeguarding is everyone's business** (*Scrutiny Programme Committee's Scrutiny of the Council's Corporate Safeguarding arrangements*)
- **Monitoring how Social Services are managing through the pandemic and ensuring Health & Social Care staff are supported well** (*reference to Adult Services Performance Panel*)
- **Monitoring the Council's Recovery and Transformation Plan** (*Scrutiny Programme Committee*)
- **Continuing to monitor corporate performance** (*Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel*)

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 towards the end of each municipal year, to reflect on the year's work and scrutiny experience, specifically considering, for example, how well they have worked, whether they have focussed on the right things, and what lessons had been learnt.

5.1.2 The Scrutiny Programme Committee carried out an Annual Work Programme Review in May 2022, reflecting on the past year, the work of the Committee and work programme, to identify any improvement and development issues. As well as reviewing previously agreed improvement objectives, councillors were encouraged to identify areas of improvement in relation to the work programme and scrutiny practice, so that it is even more effective.

The following were raised:

- Current scrutiny arrangements are well-established.
- Having to prioritise activity because of limited time and resources can be frustrating.
- We need to ensure that the structure of Scrutiny and activities under the Scrutiny Programme Committee align well with Council / Cabinet priorities with good level of scrutiny across all Cabinet Portfolios and is focussed on cabinet decision-making.
- The Committee has done well in plugging any gaps in the work programme and held Cabinet members to account for specific portfolio responsibilities and issues, rather than a 'broad brush' approach looking at overall responsibilities.
- The Committee's co-option of Performance Panel Conveners is good.
- We need to consider whether the Committee could hold at least two sessions per year on Crime & Disorder / Safer Swansea Partnership performance, rather than an annual session.

- We need to ensure scrutiny takes in a range of perspectives on issues.
- It is important to balance local scrutiny with regional / joint scrutiny and ensure scrutiny is effectively co-ordinated and complements well, which will from 2022/23 include the newly established South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.
- We should encourage more people to participate in scrutiny and councillors to actively participate in questioning.
- We need a training programme which will include helping scrutiny councillors to improve how they question and do scrutiny better.
- Although the Council has Policy Development Committees it should be remembered that scrutiny councillors can also inform and influence the development and revision of policy through their work.
- Holding a Work Planning Conference to inform the development of a scrutiny work programme is important.

5.1.3 Feedback from Scrutiny Performance Panels

As well as discussion about future work, the following general observations can be noted:

- Overall, Panels were pleased with how the year had gone and felt they have made a positive difference to the working of Council departments and services, and citizens, through ongoing monitoring and challenge, despite the ongoing impacts from the pandemic which had in some cases affected reporting or affected the ability to hold visits or meeting people face-to-face.
- There has been excellent cross-party working within Panels - all have engaged well, with every opportunity to ask questions and contribute.
- There are positive relationships with Cabinet Member and officers, who have attended meetings and provided reports / information when requested. Panels have felt well supported.
- Panels have been flexible and understanding in the face of pressures on the organisation and specific service areas working in the most challenging circumstances. Covid has sharpened the focus of Scrutiny.
- Panels should keep a close eye on Cabinet / Cabinet Members' response to scrutiny, and follow up on agreed action(s).
- Panels could engage in peer review with other Councils to assess how well they are working.

5.1.4 Internal Audit Review of Scrutiny – There has been praise for our Scrutiny arrangements. An internal audit of scrutiny was carried out in 2021, the outcome of which was a high level of assurance and no recommendations, with no key issues / risks found. The audit looked at the role of Scrutiny, its work programme and reporting lines, the relationship between the scrutiny and audit committees, scrutiny of partnership arrangements, coverage of corporate risks in the risk register, examination and follow-up of external reviews, and compliance with the Wales Audit Office discussion paper - Six Themes to Make Scrutiny Fit for the Future. The outcome was reported to the Governance & Audit Committee in June 2021.

5.2 Scrutiny Improvement Objectives

5.2.1 A number of scrutiny improvement objectives and action plan were agreed by the Committee in January 2019. This included actions to address the three proposals for improvement made by the Wales Audit Office following its review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements in 2018. This was 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 The Committee has regularly reviewed and considered progress against the action plan and did so last in March 2022. The review of the current improvement plan showed only a small number of outstanding actions:

- Development and delivery of a scrutiny training and development programme (as suggested by Wales Audit Office) – it was agreed that this would be arranged post-May 2022 at an appropriate time during the new Council, in addition to the Scrutiny Induction Session that will be held around June 2022. It is anticipated this will include areas such as: 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.
- Developing 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 of scrutiny activity – this was developed and tested during 2021-22. We are now inviting post-meeting feedback from scrutiny participants, i.e., Cabinet Members, officers, external invitees, and public attendees, about their experience and satisfaction. They will be invited to complete a short anonymous survey shortly after each scrutiny meeting. This will provide us with valuable information that will help us to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of scrutiny practice and inform the improvement and development of scrutiny in Swansea.
- Developing a specific Facebook page for scrutiny that should improve visibility of the work of scrutiny and sharing of stories, and active public engagement – following discussion with the Corporate Director it was agreed that the Council's Facebook page could be used to post information and stories about Scrutiny, rather than a setting up a separate account, which should ensure a bigger audience. This has been utilised and is available for future use.

5.2.3 The Committee was content with progress against scrutiny improvement objectives and thought will be given to improvement objectives for the new Council term.

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: 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