



Report of the Convener

Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 11 October 2022

Role of the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel

Purpose:	As it is the first meeting of the municipal year (and Council term) this report has been written to help give clarity and ensure understanding of the role of the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel. It is also designed to aid discussion on effective working.
Content:	A description of the role of Performance Panels is provided, the focus of the Child and Family Services Panel, and link to relevant Council Priorities / Policy Commitments.
Councillors are being asked to:	Discuss the role of the Panel and effective working
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Paxton Hood-Williams, Convener of the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Liz Jordan, Scrutiny Officer E-mail: liz.jordan@swansea.gov.uk

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Within the Council's arrangements for Overview & Scrutiny, the Scrutiny Programme Committee is responsible for developing a Scrutiny Work Programme and managing the overall work of scrutiny to ensure that it is as effective as possible.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 At the same time the Committee must ensure that the work of scrutiny is:
 - manageable, realistic and achievable given resources available to support activities
 - relevant to council priorities
 - adding value and having maximum impact

- coordinated and avoids duplication.

1.4 In order to discharge the work of Scrutiny, the Scrutiny Programme Committee can establish informal Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

There are two types of Panel:

- Inquiry Panels will undertake discrete in-depth inquiries into significant areas of concern on a task and finish basis.
- Performance Panels will undertake provide ongoing in-depth monitoring and challenge to particular services / service areas

1.5 The Committee has established six Performance Panels, each with a specific focus:

- Service Improvement & Finance
- Education
- Adult Services
- **Child & Family Services**
- Development & Regeneration
- Climate Change & Nature.

1.6 Panel meetings will typically involve consideration / assessment of service performance reports from Cabinet Members, with support from lead officers, and discussion of issues arising. Where necessary, Panels will drill down into specific matters. Panels may request relevant reports on activities, performance and information that will help it to assess progress regarding the Council's work, commitments, and implementation of agreed plans.

1.7 Performance Panels are expected to have on-going correspondence with relevant Cabinet Members in order to share views and recommendations, arising from monitoring activities, holding them to account for service performance, quality and improvement.

1.8 The Committee also determines the frequency of Performance Panel meetings that can be supported within the overall Scrutiny Work Programme. Performance Panels will meet on an on-going basis during the Council term until otherwise agreed by the Committee. Accordingly, Panels will develop a work plan for meetings that effectively discharge their responsibilities and Committee expectations.

1.9 Non-executive councillors who are not members of the Committee have the opportunity to participate in Panels and other informal task and finish groups. The membership of Panels and Working Groups is determined by the Committee. The Committee will appoint Panel Conveners in the first year of a Council term, however, has agreed for Performance Panels to then re-confirm / appoint their Convener at the start of every subsequent municipal year. There are no fixed number of seats on Panels, however, more than one political group should be represented on each and should be of a manageable size in terms of team working and effective questioning. A minimum of 3 members should be present at all meetings.

- 1.10 Performance Panel Conveners are required to provide the Scrutiny Programme Committee with regular progress reports on the work and impact of their Panels. Performance Panel conveners can attend meetings of the Scrutiny Programme Committee as co-opted members.
- 1.11 Panels and Working Group meetings are accessible to the public, just as the Scrutiny Programme Committee. Agendas, reports, letters relating to scrutiny activities are published on the Council's modern.gov online platform:
<https://democracy.swansea.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

2. The Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel

- 2.1 The Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel provides ongoing challenge to performance in Child and Family Social Services and Poverty and Prevention to ensure that as the Service is undergoing major change, performance is maintained and that further improvements are made across all areas of the Service.
- 2.2 The Panel currently has a membership of 8 councillors.
- 2.3 In accordance with the agreed Scrutiny Work Programme, the Panel meets every six weeks.
- 2.4 The Panel has received relevant performance reports to monitor and challenge assessments on service performance and quality in respect of Children's Social Services. This provides a regular 'health check' on Child and Family Services activity to facilitate challenge by the Panel. The Panel has then, where necessary, drilled down on specific work, to provide a more in-depth level of scrutiny. It has monitored delivery of the Council's work, commitments and implementation of agreed plans, and assessed progress. For example, during 2021/22 this included discussion on: Wales Audit Office Reports, CIW Inspection Reports, Safeguarding, the Regional Adoption service and CAMHS. The Panel has also received updates at each meeting on the effects of COVID on the Service.
- 2.5 The Panel will write to the relevant Cabinet Members, to convey its views including suggested action, arising from meeting discussions. Letters, and responses where requested, are reported back to the Panel for comments and discussion as necessary.
- 2.6 Link to Corporate Objectives as set out within the Corporate Plan 2022/23:
- **Safeguarding** people from harm – so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation.

The Council's Corporate Plan, pages 14-17, relate specifically to Safeguarding People from Harm and have been **appended to this report**.

- 2.7 Link to Policy Commitments 2022-2027 (taken from Council report 7 July 2022):

Better care

- Swansea Council will commit to investing £750 million for better care in Swansea.
- The Council will commit to fairer pay for care workers.
- Swansea Council will strive to provide new children's care facilities within Swansea.
- We will seek to provide better day care opportunities and respite services across the City.
- Swansea Council will continue to develop and operate a network of Local Area Co-ordinators (LAC) to cover the whole of Swansea.

100 days target:

Better care

- The Council will undertake a review of post-pandemic care provision.
- We will begin options appraisal and move to increase council direct delivery of care.
- Swansea Council will engage with Health to ensure care plans align with health recovery.
- We will progress a new children's care facility.

3. Support

3.1 Performance Panels have the dedicated support of a member of the Council's Scrutiny Team. For the Child and Family Services Scrutiny Performance Panel it is currently Liz Jordan, liz.jordan@swansea.gov.uk This lead Scrutiny Officer will assist with work planning and project-manage scrutiny activities and help to ensure that things run smoothly, for example by:

- directly supporting meetings
- liaison with Cabinet Members, departments, partners and the public
- contacting and arranging witness sessions
- carrying out research and arranging evidence gathering
- carrying out and assisting with any consultation and public engagement exercises
- helping to keep the work to time
- capturing and reflecting back the ideas, evidence gathered and any key issues that have been highlighted
- assisting in the drafting of scrutiny letters and reports
- promoting work using social media and other methods of communication.

3.2 The Corporate Management Team and Service Departments are also an essential source of advice and support. Engagement with departments will be important in providing context for areas of work, knowledge about policies and service delivery, and technical expertise.

3.3 The Committee should recognise that resource constraints may have an impact on the scrutiny activity and delivery of work plans. Being focussed, proportionate and flexible will be important as we carry out scrutiny.

4. Effective Working

4.1 The Panel is encouraged to consider how it can work more effectively, for example in its preparation for meetings, and think about its approach to issues including the following:

- Developing Questions and Questioning Strategy
- Use of short Pre-meetings / Post meetings
- Team / Inclusive Working and Communication
- Decorum at meetings
- Meeting times / length
- Any other practical considerations.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Extract from Corporate Plan 2022/23 on 'Safeguarding People from Harm'.