



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Tuesday, 18 July 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: T M White (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

A Davis
F D O'Brien

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
V A Holland

Councillor(s)

M Jones
W G Lewis
S Pritchard

Co-opted Member(s)

Beth Allender

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

Councillor C A Holley, P R Hood-Williams, L R Jones, S M Jones

Officer(s)

Geoff Bacon	Head of Property Services
Brij Madahar	Scrutiny Team Leader
Debbie Smith	Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Samantha Woon	Democratic Services Officer

Also present

Councillor R C Stewart, Leader of the Council

Councillor D H Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance (Deputy Leader)

Cllr Elliott King – Cabinet Member for Culture, Human Rights & Equalities

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P M Black

Statutory Co-opted Member(s): Elizabeth Lee

4 **Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interests were declared:

Councillor F D O'Brien – Minute No. 13 – Pre-decision Scrutiny – FPR7
Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street – Community Hub Project, and Minute No.

15 - FPR7 Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street – Community Hub Project – Personal Interest.

5 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

6 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Scrutiny Programme Committees held on 16 May and 18 May 2023 be approved and signed as correct records.

7 Public Question Time.

There were no public questions.

8 Role of the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

The Chair presented the report on the 'Role of the Scrutiny Programme Committee'.

It was noted that since the Council Annual General Meeting, the Committee now comprised 10 Members, smaller than previous, and there had been changes to the membership. In regard to the Membership, the Committee also included Statutory Education Co-optees – as explained in Section 3 of the report.

The Committee is responsible for managing all Scrutiny activity within the Council, through a single Work Programme (which would be discussed at agenda item 9).

Work is either carried out by the Committee or delegated elsewhere. The Committee will have a plan of work and will establish Panels and Working Groups to examine specific topics or issues of concern to enable the engagement of all non-executive Councillors in the Scrutiny process, regardless of Committee membership.

The membership of Panels / Working Groups, as well as the appointment of a lead Councillor (known as Convener) is a matter for the Committee to determine. The role of a Convener is also explained in the report (section 4).

The Committee will monitor agreed activities and outcomes to ensure that the Work Programme is being delivered effectively, and in accordance with the Committee's wishes.

The Terms of Reference of the Committee were also included for information.

Previously the Committee has also found it beneficial to co-opt (in a non-voting capacity) those Councillors appointed as Performance Panel Conveners, not already on the Committee. These were shown in para 4.4. of the report.

As the Committee has responsibility for Scrutiny of the multi-agency Public Services Board, it has also welcomed representatives from partner agencies to assist with that Scrutiny, shown in Section 5.

To continue to do so, the Committee needed to re-new such co-option annually, and was therefore being asked to agree this again.

Finally, he stated that teamwork was important to the Committee's success, and there were some practical considerations that could help to achieve this, and some examples were given around effective working. The report encouraged members, whether long-serving or new, to reflect on the way they work together as a group, plan work, and plan for meetings; and evaluate how well things have gone, and consider any room for improvement in the way the Committee works.

Resolved that: -

- 1) The co-option of Scrutiny Performance Panels conveners to the Committee be renewed.
- 2) The co-option of partnership organisations to enable representatives to participate in the Committee's scrutiny of the Public Services Board be renewed.

9 Membership of Scrutiny Panels and Working Groups.

Resolved that the membership changes reported in relation to Panels and Working Groups be agreed.

10 Scrutiny Letters.

The Chair referred to the following letters, reflecting on recent Committee Scrutiny activity:

- Crime & Disorder Scrutiny – Safer Swansea Partnership – Letter to Joint Chairs of Safer Swansea Partnership Community Safety Partnership.
- Pre-decision Scrutiny – Economic Recovery Fund Budget Reports - Letter to Cabinet Member for Economy, Finance & Strategy (Leader).

11 Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24.

The Chair stated that following consultation with Members the report contained the emerging draft programme for the year ahead.

The draft work programme takes into account last years' programme, work already committed and feedback from the recent Work Planning Conference which included input on Council priorities and strategic challenges, and public issues. The proposed Programme showed the topics which would be looked at either through in-depth work, ongoing monitoring activities, or with a light-touch, and topics which the Committee itself would lead on.

He highlighted the key considerations for the Committee to think about before agreeing the programme, and took Members through the detail. He highlighted the following:

- The next inquiry would be on 'Community Assets'.
- The Service Improvement & Finance Performance Panel and Development & Regeneration Performance Panel would be merged into a new 'Service Improvement, Regeneration & Finance' Performance Panel, which would meet monthly.
- Initial Working Group topics would be looking at: Customer Contact, Public Rights of Way, and Community Growing.

Subject to agreement, expressions of interest would then be sought from Scrutiny Councillors to participate in new Scrutiny activities. He also referred to the Committee work plan for 2023/24 and stated that the next meeting on 19 September would include a session with the Cabinet Member for Environment & Infrastructure on Active Travel.

Resolved that:

- 1) The Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24 including new Inquiry topic, revised Performance Panel arrangements, and Working Group topic priorities be approved.
- 2) The Committee Work Plan be approved.

12 Date and Time of Upcoming Panel / Working Group Meetings.

The Chair referred upcoming Panel/Working Group/Regional Scrutiny meetings, for awareness.

13 Pre-Decision Scrutiny - FPR7 Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street - Community Hub Project.

The Chair presented the report which gave guidance on pre-decision scrutiny ahead of consideration of the Cabinet report on FPR7 Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street – Community Hub Project.

The Leader of the Council responded to a question which challenged the location of the Community Hub and accessibility. He stated that it would not be viable to unwind the existing Project, with technical design now complete, jeopardise grant funding that has been secured, and incur abortive costs if the Council was to now look at other options. He dismissed a suggestion that the former Debenhams building would be a more suitable location, stating that the Council was in active negotiations about its future use with focus remaining on retail. He was satisfied that the Community Hub on Oxford Street / Princess Way, which will house the Central Library, Archives and other public services, was an accessible location.

14 Exclusion of the Public.

The Committee was requested to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business identified in the recommendations to the report on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the exclusion paragraph of 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation)(Wales) Order 2007, relevant to the item of business as set out in the report.

The Committee considered the Public Interest Test in deciding to exclude the public from the meeting for the items of business where the Public Interest Test was relevant, as set out in the report.

Resolved that the public be excluded for the following items of business.

(Closed Session)

15 FPR7 Redevelopment of 277-278 Oxford Street - Community Hub Project.

The Committee discussed the Joint Report of the Cabinet Members for Corporate Services & Performance and Culture, Human Rights & Equalities, which was on the 20 July Cabinet agenda for decision.

The Cabinet Members, Leader of the Council, and the Head of Property Services addressed the Committee and responded to questions.

The Committee discussed the feedback that it should provide to the Cabinet meeting, which the Chair will attend to give.

Resolved that the Chair write to the Cabinet Members to convey the Committee's views.

The meeting ended at 5.43 pm

Chair