

Swansea Scrutiny Results Scorecard 2012-13

Scrutiny Practice	A. How much scrutiny did we do?	B. How well did we do it?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of board and committee meetings = 24 2. Number of panel meetings/working groups = 65 3. Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 4 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Councillors who say they have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny = 89% 5. Staff who say they have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny = 71% 6. Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 69% 7. Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 89% 8. Councillors who agree that the level of support provided by the Scrutiny Team is either excellent or very good = 89% 9. Staff who agree that the level of support provided by the Scrutiny Team is either excellent or very good = 70%
Scrutiny Outcomes	C. How much did scrutiny affect the business of the Council?	D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Number of chairs letters written to cabinet members = 13 11. In depth inquiries / reviews reported to Cabinet = 3 12. Action plans agreed = 3 13. Follow ups undertaken = 7 14. Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre decision scrutiny = 0 15. Number of scrutiny board / committee meetings attended by Cabinet Members = 7 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = 100% 17. Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 69% 18. Councillors who agree that scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the Council = 79% 19. Staff who agree that scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the Council = 65%

2012-13: A Year of Change for Scrutiny

The last year has been a year of transition for scrutiny in Swansea. A new Council following the elections in May 2012 wanted to make scrutiny more flexible and cross cutting while ensuring that more councillors could contribute. A new streamlined 'three board' structure was subsequently introduced to achieve these aims. The structure was updated again in October 2012 and there is now a single Scrutiny Programme Committee that allocates in depth work to informal task and finish groups called panels and one off pieces of scrutiny to one-off working groups. Previous scrutiny structures have a number of different committees that have focused on specific areas of Council business so this is a very different way of working.

The new structure has been subject to a review by scrutiny councillors that was partly informed by a Wales Audit Office national study into the effectiveness of scrutiny including observation visits by councillors and officers from the Vale of Glamorgan. The review identified a number of areas for improvement going forward. These were:

Key Issues

- Managing the Workload
- Preparing for Meetings
- Identifying Members' Skills
- Improving Communication / Raising Awareness & Engagement
- Reviewing Progress

Other Issues

- Layout of Room
- Questioning
- Clarity of Outcomes (individual items and overall)
- Inquiry Panels (focus and length of inquiries)
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Opportunities for cooption
- Engagement with All Cabinet Members
- Engagement with Auditors / Inspectors - Developing Work Programme

This annual report is in the scorecard format agreed by the Committee last year. The idea is that we can use a number of different indicators to help us to understand and reflect on:

- How much scrutiny we did
- How well we did it
- How much scrutiny affected the business of the Council
- The outcomes of scrutiny

This year, to reflect the importance of improving councillor engagement an indicator showing the % of backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny has been added.

The Indicators

A. How much scrutiny did we do?

1. Number of formal committee/board meetings = 24

Formal board and committee meetings for scrutiny are held in public and give councillors the opportunity to hold cabinet members to account and challenge the performance of services.

The scrutiny boards and committees for 2012-13 were as follows:

- Scrutiny Programme Committee (7 meetings)
- Place Scrutiny Board (5 meetings)
- People Scrutiny Board (4 meetings)
- Stronger and Safer Communities Scrutiny Board (5 meetings)
- Scrutiny Programme Board (3 meetings)

2. Number of panel meetings/working groups = 65

Panel meetings and working groups are established by the Scrutiny Programme Committee with an appointed convener.

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.

Performance panels - these provide in-depth monitoring and challenge for clearly defined service areas.

Working groups are established when a matter should be carried out outside of the committee but does not need a panel to be set up.

3. Number of in-depth inquiries completed = 4

Work on the following in-depth inquiries was completed during 2012-13:

Inquiry	Panel
<i>Tourism:</i> Are we maximising Swansea's potential as a destination for tourists?	Tourism Inquiry Panel
<i>Improving Services for Looked After Children:</i> How can the local authority and key partners improve the experiences of looked after children in Swansea at different life stages?	Looked After Children Inquiry Panel
<i>Public Transport:</i> How can public transport help to improve levels of social inclusion across different communities and groups in Swansea?	Public Transport Inquiry Panel
<i>Building the Right Foundations:</i> How can the Council and its partners increase the overall supply of affordable housing in the City & County of Swansea?	Affordable Housing Inquiry Panel

B. How well did we do it?

4. Councillors who say they have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny = 89%

Awareness and understanding of scrutiny is an important aspect of effectiveness. This data is collected via an annual survey of Councillors. The numbers of councillors who responded to the survey was 38 (53% of all councillors). The figure for 2011-12 was 97% however half of scrutiny councillors were newly elected in May 2012.

5. Staff who say they have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny = 71%

Awareness and understanding of scrutiny is an important aspect of effectiveness. This data is collected via an annual survey of staff, partners and the public. The number of people answering this question was 73 which is a low number from which to draw meaningful conclusions. The figure for 2011-12, which was based on a more robust sample size, was 42%.

6. Average councillor attendance at scrutiny meetings = 69%

The rate of councillor attendance measures an important aspect of effectiveness as it reflects the engagement of councillors in the scrutiny process. Attendance figures for councillors attending formal meetings are collected by the Members Support Team and published on the Council's website. This year's figure is an overall attendance figure that includes the attendance at the Boards that met for five months, the Scrutiny Programme Committee that met after that, the panels and the working groups. The figure for formal board meetings in 2011-12 was 65%.

7. Backbench councillors actively involved in scrutiny = 89%

The large majority of backbench councillors were involved in scrutiny either through the Boards, the Scrutiny Programme Committee, panels or working groups. There were only seven backbench councillors who were not involved in scrutiny during the year.

8. Councillors who have used the service who agree that the level of support provided by the Scrutiny Team is either excellent or very good = 89%

The Scrutiny Team provides capacity for the boards and committees to undertake their work by undertaking, for example, project management, research, report writing and liaison with cabinet and witnesses. This data is collected via an annual survey of councillors. The number of

people answering this question was 39. This was the first year that this information was collected.

9. Staff who agree that the level of support provided by the Scrutiny Team is either excellent or very good = 70%

The Scrutiny Team provides capacity for the boards and committees to undertake their work by undertaking, for example, project management, research, report writing and liaison with cabinet and witnesses. This data is collected via an annual survey of staff and partners. Only staff who have used the service are asked this question. The number of people answering this question was 73. This was the first year that this information was collected.

C. How much did scrutiny affect the business of the Council?

10. Number of chairs letters written to cabinet members = 13

Chairs letters allow scrutiny boards and committees to communicate quickly and efficiently with the relevant cabinet members. They use these letters to raise concerns, highlight good practice, ask for further information and make recommendations. In the previous year 42 letters were written to cabinet members.

11. In-depth inquiries / reviews reported to Cabinet = 3

In depth reviews are reported to Cabinet so that the relevant cabinet members can respond to the recommendations agreed by scrutiny. The following in-depth reviews were reported to Cabinet from scrutiny with the number of recommendations from each shown in brackets:

- Review of Swansea City Centre (10)
- Review of Support for Carers (12)
- Review of Support for Care Leavers (16)

12. Action plans agreed = 4

Once recommendations have been agreed by the relevant cabinet member(s) they will then produce an action plan detailing how the recommendation will be achieved. The following action plans for cabinet members were agreed following in-depth reviews during 2012-13:

- Swansea City Centre
- Support for Carers
- Support for Care Leavers

In the previous year five action plans were agreed as a consequence of scrutiny in depth inquiries / reviews.

13. Follow ups undertaken = 7

In order to check whether the agreed action plans have been carried out, scrutiny will ask for follow up reports from cabinet members. There are usually two of these reports for each topic – a first follow up and a final follow up where scrutiny councillors will conclude the work for that review. The following follow ups were considered in 2012-13:

- The Community Capacity Pillar of the Transforming Adult Social Services Project
- The Role of Teaching Assistants across the Primary Sector in Swansea
- Support for Carers
- Support for Care Leavers
- Swansea City Centre
- Literacy
- Role of Councillors as Corporate Parents

In the previous year eight follow ups were considered by scrutiny.

14. Number of Cabinet reports subject to pre decision scrutiny = 0

Pre decision scrutiny involves scrutiny councillors considering cabinet reports before cabinet makes a final decision. In the previous year one cabinet report was subject to pre decision scrutiny.

15. Number of scrutiny board / committee meetings attended by Cabinet Members = 7

Cabinet members attend scrutiny meetings to answer questions and provide information. Cabinet attendance at scrutiny meetings is a good indicator that the 'holding to account' role of scrutiny is functioning well. The move to a one committee system means that this indicator is no longer as meaningful. In fact cabinet members were in attendance at 100% of Scrutiny Programme Committee meetings as well as contributing a number of panel meetings.

D. What were the outcomes of scrutiny?

16. Scrutiny recommendations accepted or partly accepted by Cabinet = 100%

The rate that cabinet accept scrutiny recommendations is a good indicator of whether scrutiny is making strong recommendations based on robust evidence. Cabinet responded to 38 scrutiny recommendations in 2012-13 of which 35 were accepted and 3 were partly accepted. None were rejected. The figure was also 100% for the previous year.

17. Recommendations signed off by scrutiny as completed = 69%

When follow up reports are presented to scrutiny they detail which of the recommendations from the in depth inquiry / review have been completed in line with the cabinet member's action plan and which have not. Scrutiny councillors then consider whether they agree with the assessment taking into account the evidence they are resented with. This indicator represents the percentage of recommendations accepted by scrutiny as being completed for the year (71 recommendations were considered of which 49 were signed off as complete). This is a new indicator.

18. Councillors who agree that scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the Council = 79%

As part of an annual survey, councillors are asked whether they believe that scrutiny has made a difference. The numbers of councillors who responded to the survey was 38 (53% of all councillors). The figure for 2011-12 was 87%.

19. Staff who agree that scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the Council = 65%

As part of an annual survey of staff and partners, people are asked whether they believe that scrutiny has made a difference. The number of people answering this question was 73. The figure for 2011-12 was 57% although this was from a more robust sample.