



2023/2024

**‘Environment, Regeneration, Streetscene
Services Scrutiny Committee’s Annual
Report’**

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1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee for the period June 2023 to May 2024.

Much of our scrutiny work this year has followed on from work started the year prior, including follow up scrutiny and monitoring after our task and finish groups.

We're now at the end of our second year in this committee, and members have yet again shown their commitment to seeking to find productive recommendations to aid the work of council.

Whilst these have not all been taken forward, all have provoked discussion and consideration from the officers and cabinet members when taking their decisions.

I want to thank all committee members for their work, as well as the officers and cabinet members who have engaged productively with us, even through some tough and probing questioning.

I now look forward to the new civic year ahead where we will be undertaking a new model of scrutiny.

Councillor S. Pursey, Chairman.
Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee.

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny, and they are:

1. provides 'critical friend' challenge to executive policymakers and decision-makers.
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities.

3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process.
4. drives improvement in public services.

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways, it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. Several of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within this document.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills, and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors that is politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least 8 times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

3.1 The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee 2023/2024.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2024/2025.

4. Overview of the work of the Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services during 2023/2024.

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Environment Regeneration Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee met on 11 occasions during 2023/2024.

4.2 The Work Programme 2023/2024

Generally, the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agreed its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshop held on 15.06.23.

When developing the work programme, it was essential to consider the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committee is included in the following pages has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes)

5. Key Issues considered during 2023/2024.

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on several areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Board Members are in attendance during discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function, and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments, and I look forward to the next year as we take forward the priorities of the Council.

Issues considered June 23 – April 24

- **Detailed in full in the table attached at Appendix 1.**

Consider the recommendations of the T&F group on Parking Options 2023

02.06.23

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the following amendments.

1. That the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group included at Appendix A be endorsed and commended to the Environment, Regeneration and Street scene Cabinet Board. Subject to the addition of the following recommendation:
 - a. That the pedestrianised zone hours of operation in the Neath Town Centre be reviewed to consider closing the pedestrianised zone to vehicles in the evenings as well as the daytime.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Transport and Connectivity be invited to the next meeting of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Committee to report back on their consideration of the matters that have been put forward.

Cabinet Board Noted Scrutiny's report.

Parking Review Options Report 2023 **28.07.23 (Special)**

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

- That recommendations 31-35 of the report be approved subject to the following amendments.

- Option 6 - that the charging hours be amended to 9am to 6pm
- Option 7 that the charging hours be 9am -6pm
- That additional recommendation 1 reads that Blue-badge holders be granted an extra hour's parking on top of the existing tariffs in town centres, to reflect the additional time disabled people require, this is to ensure there is no adverse impact on disabled people as a result of the increase in hourly parking charges.
- That an additional recommendation be added:

That a full consultation is undertaken on these proposals with the community, including businesses and residents before implementation of any changes.

Cabinet board deferred this decision to a future meeting.

At the next meeting of Cabinet Board on the 14.09.23 the recommendations of the Environment, Regeneration and Streetscene Services Scrutiny Committee were approved as follows:

- 1. That when the legal orders are advertised, to change the off-street car parking order and on-street traffic orders, residents and businesses will have the opportunity to raise any objections which will be brought back to a future meeting for Members consideration before any changes are implemented.
- 2. That subject to available funding, a feasibility study would be considered to be undertaken to review the operational hours of the Neath pedestrianised zone, which will be considered against all other priorities within the Highways Capital Programme; or as suggested by Members, any other regeneration grants that become available which would be subject to a future report to Members.

- 3. That a review be undertaken in October 2024, six months after all recommendations have been fully implemented during April 2024, to allow time for measurable data to be obtained over the summer period.
- 4. That a Visitors Parking Permit, that would cover all car parks and attractions in the county (to include country parks), be explored further in conjunction with the country parks management.

Street Lighting Energy

14.11.23

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

- Following discussion, the following amendments were put forward by the scrutiny committee. The Consultation to include clear mapping of areas affected.

Cabinet board did not accept the additional recommendation, made by the Scrutiny Committee.

Street Lighting Energy - Consultation Response

22.03.24

Following scrutiny, the recommendation was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments.

- Recommendation 1 was noted.
- Recommendation 2 was commended to Cabinet Board.
- Recommendation 3 was supported to the Cabinet Board with the amendments:

Approve a pilot study of part nighttime lighting to gain a better understanding of the impacts of such saving strategies and thereby enable evidence-based decisions to be made in the future, if considered appropriate. Prior to such a pilot taking place, a further report is brought before Members giving details of the geographical location of the

proposed pilot study, the duration of the pilot study, and the times when the lights will be turned off/on, all to be agreed by Members prior to any pilot being undertaken. The results of pilot scheme then being referred to Members to inform any future decisions, if considered necessary.

Consultation shall be undertaken as part of the pilot study and shall include an assessment of the impacts upon women and young girls in terms of violence, domestic abuse, and sexual violence. The results of that consultation shall be reported to members following the completion of the pilot and consultation.

Cabinet Board supported the amendment to the recommendations of the Scrutiny committee.

6.0 Investigative Scrutiny

Each year a Scrutiny Committee can undertake a piece of work in more depth on a specific area where they feel they could assist in delivering service improvements. While the committee didn't have a task and finish group this civic year, their contributions in Task and finish groups last year lead to an influence in decisions made this civic year as noted in the item listed above 'Consider the recommendations of the T&F group on Parking Options 2023 and the subsequent amendments made.

7. Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive's Policy and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
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Alternatively, if you think Scrutiny should consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail Scrutiny@npt.gov.uk

