



2022/2023

**‘Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet
(Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub
Committee Annual Report’**

Contents

Item	Page
1. Chairs Foreword	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Purpose	4
4. Overview of the work of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-Committee during 2022/2023.	5
5. Key Issues Considered during 2022/2023	6
6. Investigative Scrutiny	9
7. Scrutiny Contacts	10

1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub Committee for the period June 2022 to May 2023.

This report provides the opportunity to reflect on the work that has been undertaken by the committee and its attempts to ensure that any decisions taken are in the best interests of the citizens of Neath Port Talbot.

You may be aware that this Committee has within its remit the scrutiny of the Council's budget, the Corporate Plan and the risk register.

We as a Scrutiny Committee are under no illusions that the difficulties facing this Council will continue for the foreseeable future and it is important the Scrutiny continues to develop as the Council responds to the national guidelines etc.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Vice Chair Councillor Chris James for his continued support along with the Cabinet Members who have been present at the meetings to listen to and consider the views of the Committee prior to making any decisions.

Finally, I would like to thank the officers for their invaluable support and guidance through the year and I look forward to working with you again during the next civic year.

Councillor, Chairman. Phil Rogers
Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-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 policy-makers 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. A number 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 Cabinet Scrutiny and Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-Committee 2022/2023.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2023/2024.

4.0 Overview of the work of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee during 2022/2023

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee met on 10 occasions during 2022/2023.

Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub-Committee met on 4 occasions during 2022/2023.

4.2 The Work Programme 2022/2023

Generally, the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agree its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshops held on 15.11.22 and the 13.06.22 for the Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Sub Committee.

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 Committees are included in the following pages and 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)

4.3 Key Issues considered during 2022/2023

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on a number of 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.

5. Issues considered Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

June 22 – May 2023

See appendix 2 attached for full list.

Insourcing of Leisure Services

Members were presented with information relating to the insourcing of leisure services, as detailed within the report circulated.

Following discussion, the following amendment to recommendation 2 contained within the circulated report was proposed and seconded: “That the Director of Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Leader and the relevant Cabinet Member be granted delegated authority to make initial decisions required to present a full business case to Cabinet/Cabinet Board in October/November 2022 to achieve the delivery of the insourcing of leisure services by the 1st April 2023 (providing that such delegation shall not be utilised where there is a proposed change in service delivery and or significant cost to service delivery).

Following scrutiny, members were supportive of the proposal to be considered by Cabinet, with the amendment included.

Strategic School Improvement Programme - Proposal to Establish an English-Medium 3 - 11 School to Replace Alltwen, Godre'rgraig and Llangiwg Primary Schools

The circulated report provided detail regarding the proposal for a new consultation around the proposal for school reorganisation in the Swansea Valley; the proposal was to establish an English-medium 3-11 school with a specialist learning support centre, in new build premises to accommodate pupils from the current catchment areas of Alltwen Primary, Godre'rgraig Primary and Llangiwg Primary Schools.

The following amendment was proposed and seconded as follows:

That the recommendation be amended to change the consultation period start date from 5th December 2022 to the new start date of 9th January 2023, with the 42 days consultation period following that date.

Following scrutiny, the Committee was supportive of the amended recommendations to be considered by Cabinet.

Public Services Board consultation on the Draft Well-Being Plan. 2023-2028

Members were given a presentation on the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board consultation on the Draft Well-Being Plan.

Members were provided with a summary of duties that arise from the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Act places a duty on the Public Services Board to prepare and publish an assessment of the well-being in its area and then prepare and publish a local well-being plan setting out its local objectives to improve the well-being in the area and the steps it proposes to take to meet them.

This is now the second well-being plan that the PSB is consulting on.

Following scrutiny members agreed to:

- Note the Neath Port Talbot Public Services Board draft Well-being Plan as statutory consultee (as listed under Section 43 (1) of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015) and provide their comments/feedback that has been raised at today's meeting be included within the consultation.

- That the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee write to the Chair of the PSB, inviting the partners of the PSB to a future meeting of the scrutiny committee to consider the PSB Well-being Plan in further detail.

Corporate Plan - Strategic Change Programme for the Period 2023- 2024

Members considered the report as circulated within the agenda pack.

Following scrutiny Members were supportive of the recommendation to Cabinet with the amendment as set out:

That the reference to Climate Change on page 133 of the circulated report be expanded to reflect the Climate Change motion approved at Council earlier this civic year and that this commitment is repeated on page 134 of the circulated report to underline the commitment to advancing this work in this civic year pending a fuller review of the corporate plan for the period 1st April 2024 onwards.

Celtic Freeport

Members were updated on the outcome of the Welsh Freeport Competition announced by the UK and Welsh governments and the request to take forward the work involved in submitting an Outline Business Case which is the next stage of the Freeport policy process, as detailed within the circulated report.

Officers advised the committee that there was an error within recommendation (e) detailed within the circulated report. It was noted that recommendation (e) read:

‘Approves the commitment of £250,000 revenue to prepare the Outline Business Case and Financial Business Case and notes any requests for additional financial commitment will be brought back to Cabinet for further approval;’

It was noted that the figure £250,000 were to read £200,000 and not £250,000 as detailed within the report.

5.1 Issues considered Cabinet (Policy and Resources) Scrutiny Sub Committee

October 2022- April 23

See appendix 3 attached for full list.

Customer Services Update

Members were provided with an update in relation to Customer Services, following the transfer of the service from Digital Services to People and Organisational Development within the Chief Executives Directorate, as detailed within the circulated report.

Officers provided members with a PowerPoint presentation.

Discussions took place around the practicalities of the telephony system and the data that it gathers. Members were interested in the full customer journey to ensure that any possible improvements were considered. Officers noted that any comments raised at today's meeting would be considered as part of the review.

Members were informed of a Council app that was currently being developed to help with the customer journey. Members were pleased about this to replace the dated council app.

Members wanted officers to have consideration for those constituents that don't use IT and to ensure a system was in place to ensure that the review was inclusive of all constituents.

The scrutiny members offered their support to officers to help with the review on Customer Services. It was noted that members were interested in having a Task and Finish group/one day workshop session.

Following Scrutiny the report was noted.

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.

Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group

Members of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee undertook a Task and Finish Group, to review the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy for the County Borough, to enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (No 1) Regulations and to aim for the Welsh Government's target of achieving 1 million Welsh Speakers by 2050.

The Task and Finish Group commenced on the 23rd November 2022 and met twice to complete this task.

The Task and finish group put forward the following recommendations.

1. That approval be granted for the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy (attached Appendix 1) to go out to Consultation for a 4 week period.
2. That the Consultation responses are considered by the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy Task and Finish Group and the final Welsh Language Promotion Strategy be proposed to Cabinet for approval.

Following scrutiny at the meeting on the 5th of April 2023 the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group was supported to the Cabinet Board.

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 democratic.services@npt.gov.uk