



# What makes research impactful? One councillor's honest take

Adam Davis, Swansea



What does  
impact  
mean to  
me?

“Impact is any positive change that improves the lives of my residents because they are always my priority.”



# Local decision-makers

## **Councillors:**

decide overall  
direction and policy  
implementation

## **Full council:**

all elected councillors,  
debate  
decisions/policy

## **Committees:**

small groups of  
councillors who review  
the council's activities

## **Cabinet:**

formed by majority  
political party

## **Leader/elected mayor:**

political leader of the  
council

## **Officers:**

permanent staff that  
perform the work of  
the council

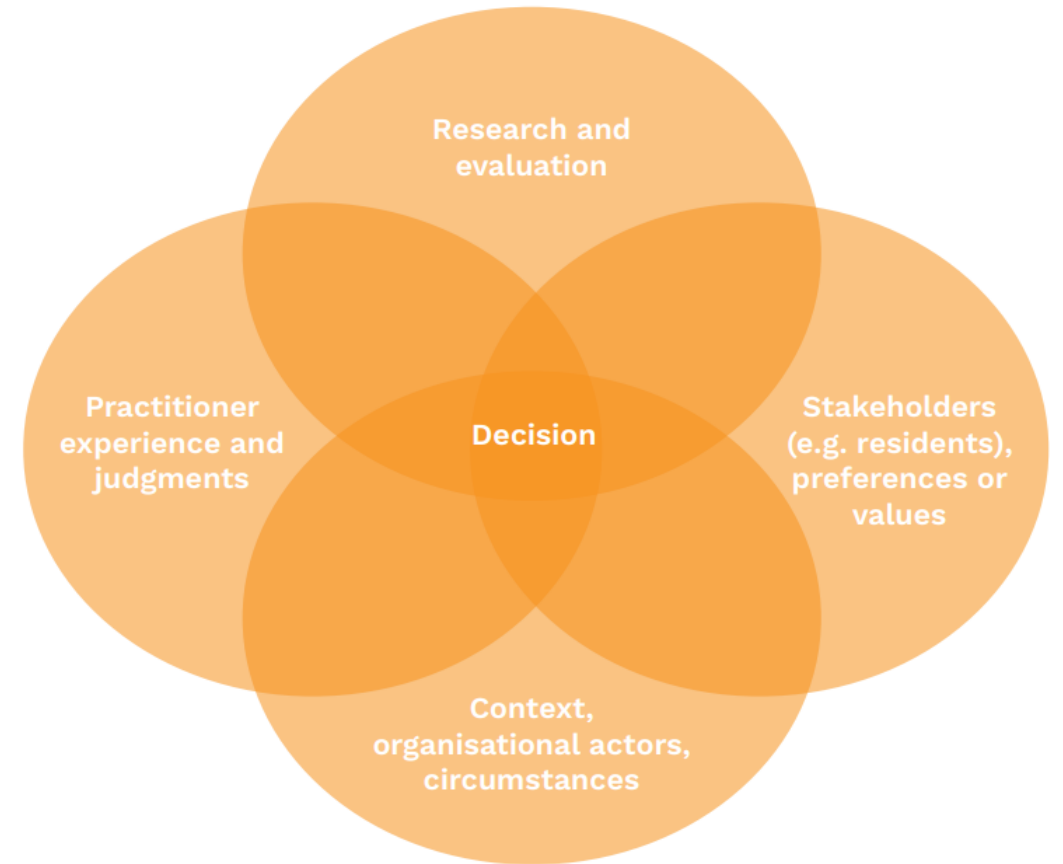
# Where can impact be felt?

County Councils	District, borough and & city councils	Parish & community councils
Education Libraries Transport Social care Waste management Trading standards Public safety	Bin collections Recycling Council tax Housing Planning applications	Bus shelters Community centres Play areas Support for local organisations Allotments

Unitary authorities/single-tier local government

# Why is impact sometimes difficult to achieve?

Data-driven decisions are made using many different types of evidence...



And councillors have lots of other demands on their time!

What do  
local  
governments  
need?

Researchers should be  
**PROACTIVE**

Researchers should  
**COMMUNICATE**  
effectively

# Which local authority is worth your time?

## There are no defined routes for engagement with councils!

- Check to see if your research aligns with priority areas:
  - Read council strategies
  - Key decisions, papers and meeting minutes must be published online
  - Attend council meetings!



The screenshot shows the Swansea Council website. At the top left is the logo for Cyngor Abertawe Swansea Council. To the right of the logo are links for 'My account', 'Residents', 'Business', and 'Council'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: 'Swansea Home > Council > Strategies, plans and policies > Corporate plans and policies > Corporate plan'. The main heading is 'Corporate plan 2023 / 2028 (2025 / 26 refresh)' followed by the sub-heading 'Delivering a successful and sustainable Swansea.' Below this is a 'Foreword' section with a numbered list of six items:

1. [Introduction - review of the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives](#)
2. [Our Well-being statement](#)
3. [Progress since 2023](#)
4. [Our Well-being Objectives](#)
5. [Monitoring delivery - keeping performance under review](#)
6. [Where to find additional information](#)

# Which local authority is worth your time?

- Check to see if your research aligns with ARIs (and use this to your advantage!)
- Find out if your council has a legal duty to act on the issue you wish to influence ([Statutory duties placed on local government - data.gov.uk](#))

The screenshot shows the Welsh Government website. At the top left is the Welsh Government logo and name in Welsh and English. To the right is a search bar with the word 'Cymraeg' and a search icon. Below the header is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Business, economy and innovation > Innovation, research and science > Areas of research interest (ARI). The main heading is 'COLLECTION Areas of research interest (ARI)'. A blue banner contains the text: 'Areas of research interest (ARI) set out the most important research questions government needs to answer to achieve its medium to long term objectives.' To the right of this banner are details: 'Part of: Innovation, research and science', 'First published: 10 September 2025', and 'Last updated: 8 January 2026'. Below the banner, there are two columns of links. The left column is titled 'In this collection' and includes links for 'What ARIs are for', 'Welsh Government ARIs', and 'How to get involved'. The right column is titled 'OUTSIDE GOV.WALES' and includes links for 'UK government ARI database on ari.org.uk', 'Guidance on writing and using Areas of Research Interest on GOV.UK', and 'Senedd ARIs on Senedd Cymru'.



How can you  
engage with local  
government?

Some councils have a  
**Strategy Team** who work  
across different policy  
areas

Some councils have  
**policy champions**

Contact your local  
councillor:

• [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)



How do we make sure we impact those with lived experience?



Scrutiny is...

“a non-political, constructive method of influencing the decisions and policies of the Council and ensuring they are sound, fit for purpose and in the best interests of the public.”



# How can you engage with local government?

- Submit a request for a scrutiny review to be undertaken
  - Be clear how this issue affects local residents
- Respond to scrutiny inquiries (and be invited as a witness)
- Attend local strategic meetings and see if you can sit on a stakeholder group

## Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 15 July 2025

### Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/26

#### Purpose

This report explains the background and purpose of the Scrutiny Work Programme. The report invites the Committee to consider and agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for the year ahead taking into account feedback from the recent Scrutiny Work Planning Conference.

## Call for Evidence: Procurement Scrutiny Inquiry

July 6, 2021 by Michelle Roberts 6 Comments

### Reasons for carrying out this piece of work

Councillors chose to carry out this piece of work because they want to

- Ensure that the Council is meeting its duties under any legal requirements
- Ensure Swansea Council procures locally, ethically and greenly while being cost effective and transparent in its practices

To help understand these issues and to answer some of these questions we are inviting written submissions on the following lines of inquiry:

# Communication tips

- Have a clear objective in mind
- Ask questions!
- Know when to use academic versus accessible language

# What's in it for you?

- Engagement at a local level is more likely to directly impact policy-making
- Easier to track your own impact
- Make a difference!





# Thank you!

Adam Davis, Swansea

