

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE B HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON MONDAY, 9 APRIL 2018

PRESENT

County Councillors B Davies, J Gibson-Watt, H Hulme, A Jenner, K Laurie-Parry, L Roberts, E Roderick, R Williams, Mrs A Davies, Mrs S. Davies and Mrs M Evitts

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors P Roberts (Chair), G Breeze, D R Jones, D Rowlands, R G Thomas and N. Bufton

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors D Jones, P Roberts and G Thomas and Parent Governor Representative N Bufton.

2.	JOINT SCRUTINY OF CORPORATE LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE PLAN
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The notes from the meeting held on the 17th January 2018 considering the Corporate Leadership and Governance Plan were accepted. Monitoring of the implementation of the plan would be timetabled as required.

3.	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE
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The Head of Democratic Services explained that the recent CIW Inspection had found scrutiny to be ineffective and that change was necessary. Consideration was being given to restructuring the Scrutiny Committees to improve effectiveness. Members were invited to share their experiences of scrutiny since the elections in 2017. It was suggested that the new structures should reflect the priorities in Vision 2025.

Issues identified included:

- The two committees are too large
- Some Members do not attend scrutiny. This was of concern to those Members who do attend regularly
- Third sector and members of public with relevant experience should be invited to take part
- Increasing the number of scrutiny committees from 2 to 4 with a smaller membership may be appropriate
- These 4 scrutiny committees could echo the four main areas of The Vision
- However, smaller committees coupled with poor attendance could further reduce the effectiveness of scrutiny
- Consideration should be given to having one Committee with a series of working groups. The Committee would oversee the effectiveness of the working groups
- The authority have 18 Senior Salaries (SSs) to use. Until the recent decrease of Cabinet Members from 10 to 8 all of the SSs were used. SSs

- were also paid to other Chairs such as Pensions and Employment and discussion was had on comparative workloads of committees
- It was confirmed that SSSs could not be shared or split
 - The appropriate level of scrutiny for an area of the authority was discussed. There was some opinion that insufficient scrutiny is able to be undertaken due to lack of resource. Additionally other areas may have insufficient scrutiny due to the focus being on a few areas
 - Scrutiny should be undertaken in the full committee rather than working group (ie in the public arena)
 - Consideration should be given to webcasting scrutiny
 - Members are unclear if they should be scrutinising overall performance of a service or a particular project
 - Concentration of expertise in a smaller number of Members who meet regularly could be beneficial. For example the Planning Committee has quickly gained expertise through three weekly meetings. Ad hoc scrutiny has not resulted in similar gains

The Joint Meeting adjourned for the WAO Focus Group to take place.

The Scrutiny Committee B meeting reconvened at 3.30.

Resolved that: Parent Governor Representative A Davies was elected to Chair the remainder of the meeting.

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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No declarations of interest were received.

5.	DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS
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No disclosures of Party Whips were received.

6.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th January 2018 as a true record.

Concern was raised that the information regarding schools with unlicensed deficits had still not been provided.

That Scrutiny Committee B follow up with the Director of Education the provision of information regarding schools with unlicensed deficits.

7.	CHAIR'S BRIEFING
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In the absence of the Chair no briefing was given.

8. CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY GROUP
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The update from the Children's Services Scrutiny Group was received. The Scrutiny Officer gave the following update.

Arrangements for visits to Children's Services teams had been put in place and some of the visits had taken place. The group would discuss the visits when they next met. Other Members asked to be added to this programme.

Since the written update the group had looked at Fostering, Looked After Children and Out of County Placements. This will be reported in the next update. Mr G Burrows (ex-County Councillor from Monmouthshire and Member of the Improvement Board) observed this meeting and is arranging visits for Members to Scrutiny Select Committees in Monmouthshire.

The next meeting will consider the 90 Day report to Welsh Government, monthly performance data together with assessment compliance and quality assurance.

The Scrutiny Group remain concerned that there appears to be nothing coming through Cabinet from Children's Services and that governance arrangements need to be examined.

9. EDUCATION SCRUTINY GROUP

The update from the Education Scrutiny Group was received. The Scrutiny Officer gave the following update.

Home to School Transport and the Education Self Evaluation Report were on the Cabinet agenda for 10th April. Scrutiny Observations on both these items had been provided to Cabinet and Councillor L Roberts would represent Education Scrutiny at Cabinet.

The Lead Member and Cllr S McNicholas had attended the Joint ERW Scrutiny session in Carmarthen. Assembly Member K Williams had attended the meeting and Members had expressed concern that ERW was not improving as quickly as the other regional consortia. The Group also expressed their concerns regarding Elective Home Education and the lack of a statutory requirement for children and young people to be registered as home educated.

There is concern that Joint Chairs have instructed Education Scrutiny to undertake pre-Cabinet scrutiny on six items which were all due to be considered at Cabinet in July. This will require three meetings during one week in June.

10. JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on the 5th December 2017 and 9th January 2018 were received.

Members expressed disappointment that Joint Chairs do not appear to be taking into account their concerns when assigning work to the Committees and Working Groups.

Outcome

That the following issues be sent to Joint Chairs

1. Scrutiny of Brecon High – concerns around the impact of the recovery plan which has been agreed to prevent the authority from removing delegation. Concerns from a financial perspective which will result in class sizes in the English stream rising to 35 with classes in the Welsh Stream of 3. Why the decision was made to retain the status of Brecon as dual stream in the light of the impact this has on the running of the school. This was brought forward by 2 of the Governors of Brecon High but all Members share the concern of the impact of the Brecon situation on other schools and the Council finances.
2. HOWPS – there is much frustration expressed from Members of their experience of HOWPS from the schools perspective. They are of the opinion that this scrutiny should not be delayed – the issues need to be resolved urgently. They accept that this would properly be undertaken by Scrutiny A but suggest that a couple of Members from the Education Scrutiny Group join this working group to contribute the experiences from the education perspective. Again all Members consider this should be given high priority.
3. A further request is that the Schools Asset Management Plan be scrutinised. This was in response to concern regarding a particular school but it was understood that scrutiny is not an appropriate vehicle to consider ward issues and the correct way would be to look at the pan Powys situation.
4. Finally Members again request to scrutinise the change of age of admission. Members have extreme concerns regarding the implementation of this are asking for Joint Chairs to explain how they came to the decision that this is a low priority.

11. WORK PROGRAMME

This item had been covered under the Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs minutes item.

Parent Governor Representative A Davies