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Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs Steering Group – 18 October 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP HELD AT PEN Y FAN ROOM - COUNTY HALL ON TUESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2016

PRESENT: County Councillor D R Jones (Chair), M J Dorrance, D R Jones, JG Morris and Mr J Brautigam

Officers: Clive Pinney, Solicitor to the Council, Wyn Richards, Scrutiny Manager, Liz Patterson and Lisa Richards, Scrutiny Officers

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| 1. | APOLOGIES | JCSG49 - 2016 |
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Members: County Councillors L V Corfield, K W Curry, S C Davies and M C McKenzie

Officers: J Patterson, D Powell and P Griffiths

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| 2. | DRAFT NOTES - FOR CONSIDERATION | JCSG50 - 2016 |
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Documents Considered:

- Notes of Meeting held on 13 September 2016

Issues Discussed:

- School Transport – potential overspend of £0.5M. A separate meeting had been held with the Chief Executive regarding the outcomes of the Walters report. This could lead to scrutiny on school transport, schools modernisation and the fair funding formula but a further meeting would need to be held to scope those reviews. It was noted that there were a number of historical anomalies within the current arrangements for school transport. Individual arrangements for SEN pupils were also in place and these would not be affected by a general review of the Policy. It was suggested that a report be requested for further consideration regarding the reasons for the overspend and actions being taken to address the overspend.
- Commissioning and Procurement Board – a response was circulated to the Joint Chair's report in May 2016. A Commissioning Procurement Review had been undertaken by the LGA and an Action Plan was reported to be in place. However, the Portfolio Holder had not seen the review. Joint Chairs queried why the LGA and not the WLGA had been used to undertake the review, given the diverging policies between England and Wales. The emerging Resource Plan was also key to future developments.

Outcomes:

| Action | Completion Date | Action By |
|---|------------------|-----------|
| The Education and Highways services be asked to prepare a report detailing the extent of the overspend in school transport, actions being taken to address the overspend, whether the home to school transport policy is to be reviewed and, if so, | 22 November 2016 | WR |

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| when this can be expected | | |
| The Chair write to the Leader to ask why the LGA had been used rather than the WLGA and to request a copy of the review | 22 November 2016 | Chair/LR |
| The Chair of the Commissioning and Procurement Board to be invited to the next meeting | 22 November 2016 | LR |

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| 3. | DISCUSSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, STRATEGIC DIRECTORS REGARDING POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEMS | JCSG51 - 2016 |
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No senior managers were present due to a Strategic Overview Board having been called at the same time as the Joint Chairs meeting. Every endeavour would be taken to ensure future meetings did not clash.

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| 4. | DISCUSSIONS WITH LEADER REGARDING PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY | JCSG52 - 2016 |
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The Chairs of Audit and People Committees had met the Leader to discuss items for pre-decision scrutiny. The Cabinet forward work programme was inadequate to enable planning to be undertaken into the new year.

Outcomes:

| Action | Completion Date | Action By |
|--|------------------------|------------------|
| People Scrutiny Committee – Ysgol Cedewain budget | November | LP |
| Audit Committee – Brecon High School budget | | LR |
| Place Scrutiny Committee – bulky waste or leisure service savings | | LR |
| People Scrutiny Committee - Daytime Activities, Older People | December | LP |
| Place Scrutiny Committee – HAMP | | LR |

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| 5. | ROLES OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES | JCSG53 - 2016 |
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Documents Considered:

- Scrutiny committee roles

Issues Discussed:

- The proportion of co-opted members on People Scrutiny Committee was greater following the decrease in the membership of committees – this was acknowledged but the number of co-optees was at the minimum requirement. Only the Church and Roman Catholic Church were invited to be represented – other faiths were not represented, as set out in the regulations
- The Group asked if membership of committees should be reviewed. The reduction of members on committees had been designed to increase productivity – Members would have less workload and be committed to one area. This does not seem to have happened, with attendances being sporadic in some cases.
- It was proposed that the Committees be renamed Scrutiny Committee 1 and Scrutiny Committee 2 with their remits being linked to Portfolio Holders’ functions

Outcomes:

| Action | Completion Date | Action By |
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| Revised remits be drafted for the two scrutiny committees to be implemented from May 2017. | 22 November 2016 | WR |

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| 6. | SPEAKING AT CABINET MEETINGS | JCSG54 - 2016 |
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Issues:

- Current arrangements for scrutiny chairs speaking at Cabinet were not effective and causing controversy at Cabinet meetings
- Cabinet must act more strategically
- If Cabinet becomes more strategic then the role of scrutiny chair becomes clearer
- The Constitution allows scrutiny chairs and group leaders to speak at Cabinet meetings – this should not include asking questions
- Scrutiny chairs should be able to present scrutiny reviews to Cabinet
- Consideration could be given to written questions being submitted beforehand
- If scrutiny work had been completed beforehand based on an adequate Cabinet work programme, then there would no longer be a need for scrutiny chairs to speak at Cabinet
- The benefits of scrutiny attendance at Cabinet were questionable
- Cabinet was acknowledged to be ‘political theatre’
- There were too many information items or decisions to go out to consultation
- A further misconception was that scrutiny was opposition
- Consideration could be given to allowing group leaders to challenge Cabinet at County Council
- The differentiation between scrutiny chairs and group leaders must be clear
- Any changes agreed should not be brought in before the new Council in May 2017

Outcomes:

| Action | Completion Date | Action By |
|---|-----------------|-----------|
| Draft proposals to be prepared for discussion with the Joint Chairs Steering Group, Cabinet and Group Leaders in the first instance and eventual consideration by Democratic Services Committee | March 2017 | WR |

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| 7. | WORK PROGRAMME | JCSG55 - 2016 |
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Documents Considered:

- Work Programme

Issues Discussed:

- Youth Service redesign – it was noted that this was currently out to consultation but no scrutiny had been undertaken. The topic was not included on the Cabinet work programme
- Savings plans must be scrutinised for effectiveness

Outcomes:

| Action | Completion Date | Action By |
|---|------------------|-----------|
| Youth Service redesign to be rescored 5 and included as a high priority | December/January | LP |
| Depot Strategy (category 4) to be removed from list | 18 October 2016 | WR |
| Emerging Regeneration Strategy to be amended to category 3 | 18 October 2016 | WR |
| JVC to be included for review in 2018 | 18 October 2016 | WR |

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| 8. | PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD | JCSG56 - 2016 |
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56.1. Draft Notes of Previous Meeting(s)

The draft notes of 5 June 2016 were not yet available.

56.2. PSB Dates - For Information

- 20 October 2016
- 1 December 2016

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| 9. | DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS - FOR INFORMATION | JCSG57 - 2016 |
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22 November 2016
17 January 2017
28 February 2017
21 March 2017
11 April 2017
20 June 2017
11 July 2017
19 September 2017
10 October 2017
7 November 2017
5 December 2017

County Councillor D R Jones

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