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People Scrutiny Committee
14th December 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT

County Councillor D R Jones (Chair)

County Councillors A W Davies, E R Davies, J Gibson-Watt, MC Mackenzie,
S McNicholas, P J Medlicott, K M Roberts-Jones, G P Vaughan, Mrs A Davies and
Mrs L Jenkin

Officers: W Richards (Head of Democratic Services), E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer)

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| 1. | APOLOGIES | PSC46-2015 |
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor T Turner and Mrs M Evitts.

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| 2. | MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING | PSC47-2015 |
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2016.

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| 3. | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST | PSC48-2015 |
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No declarations of interest were received.

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| 4. | DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP | PSC49-2015 |
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No declarations of party whip were received.

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| 5. | CHAIR'S BRIEFING | PSC50-2015 |
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The Chair observed that since the last meeting he had attended County Hall for an increasing number of meetings as scrutiny committees are expected to undertake more and more work.

Last week he had met with the Wales Audit Office who indicated an expectation that scrutiny would be required to scrutinise schools with difficult budget situations. Training would be required before scrutiny Members would be able to undertake this work.

The Chair advised that since the last meeting Brecon High School had been removed from Special Measures but Llandrindod Wells Primary School (Cefnlllys) had been placed in Special Measures.

Cabinet has recently considered High School modernisation proposals and now intends to retain secondary education on both the Gwernnyfed and Brecon sites, to create one high school on two sites at Builth and Llandrindod (both schools are in Special Measures). The Cabinet have indicated that more time is needed for consultation in respect of Llanbister and Llanfihangel Rhydithon (Dolau)

primary schools. He doubted a decision would be taken on these schools before Council elections in May 2017.

In Adult Social Care a large overspend is forecast. Efficiencies and savings expected to be made are not on target. A number of decisions are due to be made at Cabinet on 20th December including Day Services for Older People and Older Peoples Residential Care.

The Cabinet have recently set up a Strategic Overview Board to look at all Performance Indicators across the Council under the Chairmanship of the Portfolio Holder for performance. Scrutiny and Audit Chairs were invited to observe the second of these meetings.

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| 6. | REVIEW OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES | PSC51-2015 |
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The Head of Democratic Services explained that Joint Chairs had been looking at the scrutiny arrangements. This had started when undertaking a piece of work ahead of the corporate assessment. It was identified that scrutiny were trying to do too much and were sinking under the workload. It was necessary to focus on the Cabinet work programme to prioritise work and Joint Chairs are used to filter and assign this work.

Scrutiny is moving to focus on pre-decision scrutiny which is where it is felt most value lies. The pre-decision scrutiny process is under development and has required the development of a more detailed Cabinet work programme which covers a longer period than has previously been available. It is intended that the work undertaken on the Medium Term Financial Plan should help populate the Cabinet work programme and thus the scrutiny work programme.

A further area for consideration is the balance between the two committees. At present the largest areas of work cover Adult Social Care and Education both of which are under the People Scrutiny Committee. Consideration is being given to the balance between the two committees with the potential for the following split to be proposed:

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| Committee 'X' | Adult Social Care, Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Highways |
| Committee 'Y' | Education, Children's Services, Culture, Libraries, Leisure, Countryside Services |

Other pressures have been identified including scrutiny of the Public Service Board and integration with Health as resources required have not been identified.

How is scrutiny undertaken elsewhere in Wales?

There are different approaches from authorities which have several scrutiny committees to those with just one committee and a series of work groups. The support available for scrutiny also varies with a move back towards scrutiny officers also undertaking democratic services work.

How can it be known that scrutiny makes a difference?

Scrutiny is just one part of the checks and balances that should be in place to assist with good governance. With pre-decision scrutiny it may be that a change

in recommendation or inclusion of additional information in a Cabinet report for clarity that may indicate that scrutiny has made a difference. It may also be the case that no changes were necessary. It can be difficult to clearly assign a difference arising from scrutiny but it is hoped that by getting involved in pre-decision scrutiny the opportunities to make a difference may increase.

It is not always the case that scrutiny is taken seriously and the authority needs to welcome and embrace the contribution that scrutiny can make to good decision making. There needs to be acceptance that the role of scrutiny is to contribute to good governance as all Members both Cabinet and scrutiny are working to same goal.

There was consensus that scrutiny needed to be involved in projects at an earlier stage.

There was concern regarding the lack of interest by Members to get involved in scrutiny both to be appointed to a scrutiny committee and then to commit to attend working groups. The bulk of the work fell to a few committed Members and scrutiny could be more effective if this workload was shared.

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| 7. | ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY GROUP | PSC52-2015 |
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Documents considered:

- Progress report

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the work programme for the early part of 2017 had been completed and included:

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| 5 th Jan 10.00am | Learning Disability (to Cabinet on 17 th Jan) |
| TBC | Joint long term health and care strategy |
| 1 st Feb 10.00am | Dom Care (to Cabinet on 28 th Feb) |
| 1 st Mar 2.00pm | Res Care (to Cabinet on 21 st Mar) |
| TBA | Powys People Direct (jointly with Children's) |

Outcome:

- That the update be received.

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| 8. | CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY GROUP | PSC53-2015 |
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Documents considered:

- Progress Report – Scrutiny Officer

The Lead Member advised that she had attended the Star Awards for Looked After Children which were presented by the High Sheriff.

The Lead Member advised that there were still staffing issues at Bannau/Camlas and that the service were looking at reworking the staff rotas to make them more attractive. This is an issue which at People Scrutiny Committee in September 2015 scrutiny were advised was being examined.

The work programme for this group includes an update on Powys People Direct jointly with Adult Social Care and a briefing from the new Head of Service.

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| 9. | EDUCATION SCRUTINY GROUP | PSC54-2015 |
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Documents considered:

- Progress Report – Scrutiny Officer

It was requested that the group undertake further monitoring work on the implementation of the change of age of admission to primary school, particularly around the expected savings once the costs of the changes have been met.

Outcome:

- That the report be received.

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| 10. | HEALTH SCRUTINY | PSC55-2015 |
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Documents considered:

- Progress Report – Scrutiny Officer

The Lead Member advised that he had attended a meeting of Future Fit in Telford regarding the future of health services in Shropshire which are accessed by parts of north Powys. There had been no agreement on the way forward.

Outcome:

- That the update be received.

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| 11. | JOINT CHAIRS NOTES | PSC56-2015 |
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Documents considered:

- Notes of the meeting held on the 13th September 2016 and 18th October 2016.

Outcome:

- The notes were received.

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| 12. | WORK PROGRAMME | PSC57-2015 |
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The work programme was received.

County Councillor D R Jones (Chair)

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