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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON FRIDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2015

PRESENT:

County Councillors D R Jones, S C Davies, E M Jones and JG Morris

In attendance:

Officers: Peter Jones (Professional Lead - Strategic Planning and Performance), Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officer), Clive Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer) and Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services)

1.	APOLOGIES	JCSG1
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John Brautigam, Paul Griffiths (Strategic Director – Place); Amanda Lewis (Strategic Director – People); Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), David Powell (Strategic Director – Resources).

2.	DRAFT NOTES - FOR CONSIDERATION	JCSG2
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Notes – 20th May, 2015

Issues Discussed:

- Item 2 – Service Improvement Plan Scrutiny – Of 156 comments made by scrutiny, 69% of the comments had been accepted and there was no change in response to 31% of the comments.
- Community benefits policy – it was noted that this was being considered at the Cabinet meeting on 24th November. Members requested an update on the current position.

Outcomes:

- **Draft Notes were Noted.**

3.	DISCUSSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR REGARDING POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEMS.	JCSG3
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- As the relevant officers had presented apologies for meeting the item was not discussed.

4.	WAO ANNUAL IMPROVEMENT REPORT	JCSG4
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Documents Considered:

- Wales Audit Office – Annual Improvement Report 2014-15 – August 2015

Issues Discussed:

- Corporately there were no recommendations forthcoming from the WAO report. The only recommendations attached to the report were those arising from national reports undertaken by the WAO. It appeared that the WAO were undertaking more national rather than local studies. The likelihood would be that the WAO would test the Council over the next 12 months on how it had reacted to national report recommendations.
- The timescale for the development of the tracker for performance monitoring which had been agreed with the Joint Chairs had slipped due to staffing efficiency savings and was being re-considered.
- Agenda page 19 – Recommendation P2 – it seemed that the WAO were expecting the Council to reduce budgets without compromising services. However it was clarified that this was not the case and the WAO were more likely to be interested in the Council's understanding of what could be delivered with a reduced financial package.
- Agenda page 46 – Staffing data – Members requested an explanation of the staffing data to assess whether the figures in the report were both accurate and up to date to 2015.
- Agenda page 19 – Recommendation P2 – question regarding the inclusion of service levels in Impact Assessments. It was clarified that it was up to the service to decide what is included in the assessment. The process of impact assessments had been tightened up based on last year's experience and emerging legislation. All the current budget proposals are subject to a single impact assessment, with the aim that these assessments would be updated over time.
- Assessments could also be added to the risk register as a means of tightening the process.
- Members expressed concern as to whether all last year's savings had both been identified and achieved. Concern was also expressed as to whether the Council would get to a point where it was only providing core services.
- Agenda page 19 – Recommendation P4 - the review of scrutiny following the national review needed to be updated as the Joint Chairs had previously felt that the document tried to achieve too much in too short a timescale and that it required re-prioritisation.
- It was recognised that the need to assess the impact of scrutiny was not very robust and would need to be improved.
- It was noted that reporting back from Cabinet to scrutiny required strengthening and it was suggested that the Democratic Services Committee be asked to consider this for inclusion in the Constitution.
- Details should also be included on the Cabinet Forward Work Programme of any forthcoming scrutiny reports which would be considered by the Cabinet.
- The Joint Chairs requested that a copy of the new Single Impact Assessment form be circulated. It was suggested that a percentage of these assessments would need to go through the scrutiny process and there would need to be a discussion at officer level as to how this was undertaken.
- Members expressed concern that there were difficulties being encountered by the Council in employing to part time jobs especially for jobs over 16 hours which would affect entitlement to benefits. It was suggested that the Employment Committee be asked to consider this matter.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	Recommended to the Democratic Services Committee that the Constitution be strengthened to improve the reporting back on scrutiny recommendations by the Cabinet.	01/16	WR
(ii)	That the Employment and Appeals Committee be asked to request a report regarding vacancies.	12/15	WR
(iii)	That a copy of the single impact assessment be circulated to the Joint Chairs.	12/15	WR / PJ

5.	PERFORMANCE REPORTS	JCSG5
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Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- A referral from the Audit Committee – Finance and Performance Working Group was considered regarding the performance information currently provided to scrutiny.
- A number of concerns had been raised but as the Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee was not present who could present the detail, it was suggested that the item be deferred to the next meeting.
- It was suggested that the Finance and Performance Working Group should be looking at the quality of the process rather than detailed performance reports. It was also suggested that there was a need for better service improvement plans, so that there was not only a setting of objectives but also expected outcomes.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	That the item be deferred to the next meeting	22/01/16	WR
(ii)	That a meeting be convened between the Chair, Scrutiny Manager, and the Professional Lead – Strategic Planning and Performance prior to the next meeting.	22/01/16	WR / PJ

6.	SOCIAL CARE	JCSG6
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- Concerns were expressed by Adult Social Care relating to the multiple scrutiny of the service by the Audit Committee, the Internal Audit Working Group, the Finance Scrutiny Panel and the Adult Social Care Working Group.
- It was suggested that the Audit Committee should pass on its concerns to the scrutiny group or that greater cooperation should be undertaken between the Audit and People Scrutiny Committee and their groups. This

- had been tried in the past but had had limited success as each group have different terms of reference and come to a joint group with different levels of knowledge.
- It was suggested that scrutiny was looking at issues from different perspectives and a more holistic view was required to better co-ordinate work and ensure that services are subject to the appropriate levels of scrutiny.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

7.	COMPOSITION OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES	JCSG7
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Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- The Joint Chairs was asked to consider the composition of the Council's scrutiny committees arising from a budget line in the current draft budget which required the Council to reduce the cost of committees.
- This had been considered at a recent meeting of the Audit Committee, and that committee felt that as a minimum every Member should sit on at least one committee.
- The meeting noted that the responsibilities of scrutiny was continually changing and being increased e.g. recent addition of school scrutiny by Estyn.
- Members considered that the Council needs to consider why committees are needed and then how many it needed. It was further suggested that as a starting point there should be a discussion of this matter by group leaders.
- The questionnaires sent to Councillors in 2012 should be revisited to see whether Members' time preferences for meetings had changed. Consideration should also be given to which Members did not attend meetings.
- It was questioned whether scrutiny should be undertaking more of a social research role rather than looking at day to day operation of services.
- It was acknowledged that the Council needed to work differently and that the committee structure needed to change to reflect this.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	That the group leaders consider the composition of Council committees		WR
(ii)	That changes need to be in place before May 2017 at the latest. However changes should be made as soon as possible.		
(iii)	That the questionnaire should be re-sent to Members seeking their views about the timing of meetings.		WR

8.	UPDATE - REVIEWS IN PROGRESS	JCSG8
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Documents Considered:

- Update on current reviews in progress

Issues Discussed:

- Some of the items considered in the previous notes were not included in the update (minute item 3). However it was noted that some of these items had been picked up within the current workload by Working Groups.
- It was suggested that the Working Groups should feed back to the Joint Chairs identifying any issues or blockages to get their work completed.

Outcomes:

	Action	Completion Date	Action By
(i)	Chairs of committees to report back to the next meeting on where there are issues being faced by Working groups.		

9.	WORK PROGRAMME	JCSG9
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Documents Considered:

- Work Programme for 2015-16

Issues Discussed:

- None

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

10.	DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG10
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- 22nd January, 2016
- 18th March, 2016
- 13th May, 2016
- 15th July, 2016
- 16th September, 2016
- 25th November, 2016

11.	DRAFT NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S)	JCSG11
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Documents Considered:

- 11th June, 2015
- 24th September, 2015

Issues Discussed:

- None.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

12.	LSB DATES - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG12
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- 3rd December, 2015
- 10th March, 2016
- 9th June, 2016

- 22nd September, 2016
- 1st December, 2016

13.	LSB SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	JCSG13
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- It was reported that the current position on appointments to the LSB Scrutiny Committee is as follows:
 - Powys Local Health Board – appointment under discussion.
 - Powys Community Health Council – appointment under discussion.
 - Police and Crime Commissioner – declined offer at present but will review at a later date.
 - PAVO – Vice-Chair appointed – Mr Martin Nosworthy.

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

**County Councillor J.G. Morris
Chair**