

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON TUESDAY, 5 JULY 2016

PRESENT: County Councillors D R Jones (Chair), K W Curry, L V Corfield, S C Davies, JG Morris and Mr J Brautigam

Officers: Paul Griffiths (Strategic Director - Place), Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officer), Clive Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), David Powell (Strategic Director - Resources), Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer) and Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services)

1.	APOLOGIES	JCSG1 - 2016
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Members: County Councillors M J Dorrance
Officers: Amanda Lewis and Peter Jones

2.	NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING	JCSG2 - 2016
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Documents:

- Notes of 24 May 2016

Outcome:

- **Noted**

3.	DISCUSSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, STRATEGIC DIRECTORS REGARDING POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEMS	JCSG3 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- The Chief Executive reported a change in emphasis in relation to schools scrutiny. He had had discussions with WG officials around ERW particularly where they were involved in schools in special measures. There needed to be further discussion regarding demonstrating that ERW is being held to account in terms of school improvement. He suggested that there should be regular attendance at the School Scrutiny Panel by the Hub Lead and Chief Executive of ERW in order to scrutinize their role and advice to schools in special measures. Schools in Powys in special measures were taking too long to improve.
- The Chair informed the meeting that Brecon High School may come out of special measures if this year's exam results were positive. Estyn no longer consider financial issues. Intervention at Brecon High School is costing approximately £200K per annum and, if special measures were to be lifted, those posts would need to continue otherwise the situation would be exacerbated
- Challenge Advisers are employed by the Authority but are responsible to ERW and consideration should be given to how to ensure efficient and

effective challenge. Many Challenge Advisers have been teachers and there can be difficulties where a Challenge Adviser has to challenge former colleagues. ERW has been established on a different basis to the other three bodies operating in Wales and this appears to be an area of concern. Estyn have recently completed an inspection of ERW and the Chief Executive was interviewed in this regard. There needs to be greater clarification of roles and accountability.

- Failing schools are unacceptable and there is a greater risk of poor performance and increased debt. It was thought that a thorough review of budgets and demands should be undertaken. The Leader is a member of ERW and he should be asked to raise these issues with them. A further suggestion was made that all LEA Governors should be brought together for additional training around their roles and responsibilities and be adequately equipped to challenge Head Teachers and senior managers. Governors can only rely on the information they are given. It was suggested that the problems were structural and ERW does not consider those structures. Evidence being given to governing bodies is qualitative rather than quantitative. It may become necessary for the LEA to use the powers vested in it although the political repercussions of such action were noted.
- The Group debated the way in which scrutiny could deal with the issues raised. This could be undertaken by the Schools Scrutiny Panel in interviewing the Hub Lead and Chief Executive of ERW and at the wider regional group. It was acknowledged that the regional ERW scrutiny group consisted of a number of retired teachers who were now councillors and could be too defensive.
- Delivery of the Corporate Improvement Plan was heavily dependent on ERW's performance
- An independent report into school transport at Llanfyllin High School had raised wider, systemic issues which could usefully be investigated further by a joint group comprising Members of Audit, Place and People Scrutiny Committees. This Group should also consider the way in which school budgets could be used during the transformation process. The Fair Funding Formula could also be considered to ensure schools are funded in a modern and proactive way – the Authority cannot continue to increase funding at failing schools as this does not necessarily lead to improvement. The Schools Finance Service should also be reviewed.
- The Strategic Director Place had given a presentation to the Place Committee on the major issues affecting the directorate. It had been suggested that the Committee should review the process for identifying options for Highways Transport and Recycling and then track the progress of the option that is agreed upon.
- The profile of savings delivery in Adult Social Care remains a concern. Activity should be in hand now to deliver savings in 2017/18 – joint scrutiny could be considered between People Scrutiny Committee and The Finance Scrutiny Panel.
- The Adult Social Care Scrutiny Group should consider equality of access for services as assessments should be portable. Local area assessments may lead to differences in delivery of service.
- These latter items will be considered under the scrutiny work programme later on the agenda

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
A meeting with the Chairs of Audit, People and Place, Chief Executive and Strategic Director, Resources to scope a review of the issues raised within the Walters report be convened.	July 2016	LR
The Leader be briefed on the issues raised and asked to raise these with ERW	July 2016	Chief Executive
The Schools Scrutiny Panel to invite the Hub Leader and Executive of ERW to regular meetings	Ongoing	LP
Additional training to be arranged for LEA Governors regarding their roles, responsibilities and greater challenge of Head Teachers and senior managers	September 2016	CP

4.	SCRUTINY IN CHALLENGING TIMES	JCSG4 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Notes of Conference ‘Scrutiny in Challenging Times’

Issues Discussed:

- Consideration should be given to starting with a blank sheet of paper – do one review well rather than spread resources to thinly
- No authority was well resourced for scrutiny
- The Government appeared to be more proactive in England – if a local authority was failing in an area, that service would be taken away
- Wales had been perceived as being good at scrutiny but was now slipping back

Outcomes:

- **Noted**

5.	PROCESS FOR PRE DECISION SCRUTINY	JCSG5 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Pre Decision scrutiny process

Issues Discussed:

- A process was being developed following a joint meeting with Cabinet regarding scrutiny's earlier involvement with major issues
- The Cabinet Work Programme was not sufficiently populated to enable scrutiny to complete its own work programme adequately
- Scrutiny would have to remain flexible as some issues will move more quickly than others
- Scrutiny must be careful not to attempt to be involved in the decision making
- An earlier evaluation of projects could lead to alternative proposals
- Strategic Directors foresaw difficulties with the proposed timescales

Outcomes:

- **Noted.**

6.	CABINET WORK PROGRAMME	JCSG6 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Cabinet work programme

Issues Discussed:

- The forward work programme must be completed more accurately

Outcomes:

- **Noted**

7.	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME	JCSG7 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Scrutiny work programme

Issues Discussed:

- The work programme was reviewed alongside issues raised during the meeting and prioritised

Outcomes:

The scrutiny work programme was prioritised as follows:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Schools Finance etc review	November 2016	LR/LP
Adult Social Care – Day Services for Older People	September 2016	LP
Regeneration – strategy work streams – assess current position with Head of Service	July 2016	WR
ERW Challenge Advisory Service	September 2016	LP

Libraries Service Redesign and Delivery – pre scrutiny	September 2016	LR
Household Waste Recycling Centres	September 2016	LR
Management of Care Homes	September 2016	LP

8.	PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD	JCSG8 - 2016
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8.1. Draft Notes of Previous Meeting(s)

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting on 9 June 2016 were not yet available.

8.2. PSB Dates - For Information

- 22 September 2016
- 1 December 2016

9.	DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG9 - 2016
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Following a decision by Cabinet to adjust their meeting dates, meetings of the Joint Chairs and Vice-chairs Steering Group would also be amended as follows:

- 13 September 2016
- 4 October 2016
- 22 November 2016
- 20 December 2016

County Councillor D R Jones
Chair