

NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP – SCRUTINY, AUDIT AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEES.

8TH NOVEMBER, 2012 – COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS.

PRESENT: County Councillors W.T. Jones, Mrs K.S. Silk, A.W. Davies, Mrs M. Mackenzie, Mrs D. Bailey, E. Michael Jones and Mrs S. Davies.

Officers:

Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager), Lisa Richards and Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officers), Clarence Meredith (Strategic Director – Law and Governance) Janet Kealey (Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services), Clare Williams (Head of Finance).

1. Apologies.

County Councillor J.G. Morris, Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), Geoff Petty (Strategic Director – Finance and Infrastructure).

2. Notes of Last Meeting.

Documents Considered:

- 11th October, 2012.

Issues Discussed:

- Item 18 – Other Business and reference of letter from the Chair of the Standards Committee to the Member Development Working Group.

Outcomes:

- Received.

3. Highlight Report – Quarter 1.

Documents Considered:

- Highlight Report – Quarter 1 – 2012 - 2013.

Issues Discussed:

- Report arisen from comments by Chief Executive at previous meeting regarding the provision of background information for scrutiny.
- Report was first attempt and could be refined according to Members needs and requirements.
- Report would be updated quarterly in relation to performance and finance and as and when information available for other matters.
- Complaints not included as the Council did not have a recording system for complaints currently. This was to be in place by the year of the financial year, following which information could be provided to populate this section.
- Powys Change Plan – scrutiny should focus on outcomes rather than process.
- LSB scrutiny – Joint Chairs should consider methodology for scrutinising LSB. Questioned as to whether scrutiny should consider how effective partners were at scrutinising themselves. Explained that LSB scrutiny was about scrutinising delivery of partnership projects not scrutiny of individual bodies.
- Executive summary comment to be included at end of each section – include comment as to whether there were items which needed scrutiny currently or in future.
- Internal Audit work plan and list of reviews undertaken by Internal Audit to be considered for inclusion in report.

- Clarity required on Resident's Survey question relating to regeneration.
- Report could be useful for all Members not only those on Scrutiny and Audit Committees.
- Report required further work (addition of quarter 2 information) and consideration at next meeting.

Outcomes:

- Agenda – January / February 2013 – methodology for scrutinising LSB.
- Scrutiny Manager to speak to Cardiff Council about their model for LSB scrutiny.
- Copy of Resident's Survey questions to be circulated to the Joint Chairs.
- Executive Summary to be included under each section.
- Internal Audit Work Plan and list of reviews to be considered for inclusion in report.
- Add quarter 2 information – Joint Chairs to reassess report.

4. Assessment of Work Programme Items.

Documents Considered:

- Overview and Individual Assessment Forms.
- Feedback on current reviews in progress.

Issues Discussed:

- Need to revise overview document – move items from Category B (Assessed as requiring a review) to Category A (Items allocated to a committee).
- Suggested that another category required relating to reviews in progress to include start and end dates – add items such as Estyn and Adult Social Care Groups.
- Audit Committee Working Groups to be included in lists.
- Workstreams need to be included for workgroups such as the Education and Social Care Groups which will undertake other work following completion of current projects.
- Process needs to change so assessment forms emailed to all chairs and then allocated to list rather than wait for a Joint Chairs Meeting so that scrutiny can react quicker to items raised.
- Concerns raised regarding numbers of items currently being reviewed, the number of potential issues and the amount of resources available to support the process.
- Revision to process discussed whereby individual member / small group of members take responsibility for individual matters – question raised as to how the scrutiny team supports such activity.
- Concern regarding members undertaking one to one meetings with officers – should be scrutiny officers present to provide impartiality to the process.
- Members wishing to undertake their own research work outside of meetings is good practice.
- Members of scrutiny being invited to Programme Board Meetings by Portfolio Holders as observers – is beneficial for scrutiny members to obtain information relevant to scrutiny and particular reviews, particularly looking forwards rather than retrospectively. Scrutiny members allowed to ask questions at end of such meetings to clarify points. Feeding back information from such meetings to others in a Working Group is an issue for the lead member to ensure that their group is brought up to date. Attendance at programme board meetings could also assist scrutiny in deciding on items for future scrutiny.
- Programme Board notes should be made available on-line for all Members to view.

- Attendance at programme board meetings is for information gathering and is not part of the scrutiny process itself.
- Welfare Reforms (Social Care Group workstream), Support Services (ICT) and A470 – links between Welsh Government and the County Council through the Trunk Road Agency (new items) need to be included in the overview document.
- Concern regarding the numbers of Members who put their names forward for review groups.
- Items which are added to the overview list and cannot be undertaken immediately – scoring should be undertaken at the time when they can be commenced.
- Feedback on current reviews:
 - Adult Social Care – discussion regarding variances.
 - CRB – Cllr Aled Davies now a member of the Strategic CRB Forum. CRB report requires completion with comments explained to put some of the issues into context. The draft copy of the revised report to be considered by Cllrs Aled Davies and Wynne Jones prior to submission to committee in December.
 - Community Pooled Equipment – long delay in completing this work – issues to be resolved between the County Council and Powys teaching Local Health Board. Once these issues resolved report will be prepared for the cabinet for a retendering exercise to be undertaken, then there will be further consideration of the issue by scrutiny.

Outcomes:

- Amend process whereby assessment forms for new items sent to Chairs between meetings and if agreed item is added to overview document.
- CRB report to be amended and approved by Cllrs Aled Davies and Wynne Jones for consideration by committee in December.

5. Discussion with Chief Executive regarding Potential Scrutiny Items.

6. Staffing Resources for Scrutiny – Management Team response.

As the Chief Executive had apologised for the meeting these items were deferred to the next meeting.

7. Good Scrutiny? Good Question! – Wales Audit Office Scrutiny Improvement Study.

Documents Considered:

- Self Evaluation document for submission to the Wales Audit Office.

Issues Discussed:

- That the document generally painted a realistic picture of scrutiny as it currently operated in Powys.
- That where there was no positive evidence in the tables whether the overall position for that section needed to change from “Partly Supporting” to “Hindering”.
- The self assessment would be presented to other Councils in the review group at a Regional Workshop to be held on 30th November, 2012.

Outcomes:

- That the document as amended be submitted to the Wales Audit Office.

8. Local Service Board – feedback from Scrutiny Chair(s) attending meeting.

Issues Discussed:

- Meeting attended on 7th November, 2012 by Cllr Wynne Jones.
- LSB had agreed new terms of reference with 4 partners being members of the LSB i.e. Powys County Council, Powys teaching Local Health Board, Dyfed Powys Police and PAVO.
- The County Council's Leader would always Chair the LSB from now on.
- Lack of information regarding the function of the Strategic Health Improvement Group – chaired by the Council's Chief Executive.
- Attendance at the meeting was poor.
- Another meeting would be held in a month's time for the LSB to get used to the new format and terms of reference. Cllr Kathryn Silk would attend.
- LSB discussed:
 - The new One Powys Plan – to be in place by April 2014 with regeneration at the centre of the plan.
 - Network management programme in Newtown to be extended.
 - Community Newspaper to replace Red Kite magazine – with all agencies involved rather than just the County Council. Partners unhappy with the individual cost of £16,000. The Council's communications team were investigating whether advertising could be included which would bring in income, as undertaken successfully by Wrexham Council.

Outcomes:

- Feedback received and noted.

9. Blackberrys for Members.

Documents Considered:

- Schedule of handset costs from the Council's ICT intranet site.

Issues Discussed:

- The need for a general updating of IT for Members.
- Members not being allowed to purchase their own equipment which can then be connected to Powys systems.

Outcomes:

- Democratic Services Committee to be asked to consider the need to update IT for Members.
- That no action be taken regarding the purchase of Blackberrys for Scrutiny Chairs.

10. Job Evaluation – Scrutiny of the Job Evaluation Project

Issues Discussed:

- Job evaluation project coming to a close with a deadline of 1st April, 2013.
- Scrutiny has been involved with Member attending project board.
- Need to include scrutiny again – suggested 2 members from each committee to consider single status arrangements, equalities impact assessment, legal advice – considered by Cabinet, and to see if they are content with the process.
- Scrutiny role is to demonstrate to regulators that scrutiny has had an involvement in the process.
- Likely to be limited scrutiny officer involvement in supporting Members.

Outcomes:

- Chairs to seek 2 members from each committee to be members of this group and report back to committees.

11. Scrutiny Training – House of Commons Outreach Service.**Issues Discussed:**

- House of Commons Outreach offered to assist local authorities in developing their scrutiny.
- House of Commons clerks willing to come to Powys and train committees – clerk and another officer would be able to come to Powys on a Friday.
- Training is free – but there are likely to be travelling expenses.

Outcomes:

- Scrutiny Manager to seek a suitable date and liaise with House of Commons contact.

12. Publicity for Scrutiny.**Issues Discussed:**

- Measure will push Councils in relation to public engagement – should the Council use publicity or its website.
- Council should publicise what scrutiny has undertaken – should also link to future agenda for public engagement – website likely to be the best way.
- This work needs to demonstrate the difference that the work has made – what outcome achieved.
- Scrutiny needs to apply pressure e.g. to the Council where recommendations go to Cabinet and are not implemented.
- Start with publicity by means of Red Kite and then look at using the website.
- Issue over resourcing the development of the website.
- Individual Chairs should prepare items for release to the press.

13. 6 Monthly Report on Scrutiny Activity.**Issues Discussed:**

- People Committee intend to prepare a 6 month report for members.
- Report for members could include a summary of issues considered by Joint Chairs together with details of each committee's activities (scrutiny and audit).

Outcomes:

- Scrutiny Manager to discuss with Communications Manager regarding best way of distributing this information to Members.

14. Frequency of Joint Chairs Steering Group.**Issues Discussed:**

- Bi-monthly meetings.
- Currently there is a benefit to retain monthly meetings, but a need to have shorter agendas.

15. Dates for next meetings.

- 6th December 2012 *extra date*
- 11th January, 2013
- 22nd February, 2013
- 22nd March, 2013
- 26th April, 2013
- 24th May, 2013
- 14th June, 2013
- 2nd August, 2013
- 13th September, 2013
- 23rd October, 2013
- 29th November, 2013

16. LSB Meeting Dates.

- 7th November, 2012
- 14th March, 2013
- 15th May, 2013
- 10th July, 2013
- 8th October, 2013

**County Councillor W.T. Jones
Chair**