

## **NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND THE STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEES HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON FRIDAY 10<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2011**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor J. G. Morris (Chair)  
County Councillors R. G. Brown, J. H. Brunt, Mrs S. C. Davies, Miss M. Davies, T. J. Van-Rees and Independent Members P. Swanson and R. Miller.

Officers in Attendance: Clarence Meredith (Strategic Director – Law and Governance), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Services Manager), Lisa Richards (Senior Committee Clerk), Liz Patterson (Committee Clerk).

### **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

It was agreed that this item be included on the next agenda. Councillor J G Morris was elected Chair for the meeting.

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs L. V. Corfield, L. R. E. Davies, Miss A. Holloway and Mrs M. Mackenzie.

#### **2. Notes of last meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011 were received.

#### **3. Powys Change Plan**

Councillor L Fitzpatrick introduced the Plan by identifying it as the most realistic Plan the Council had produced to date and was based on outcomes for the County's residents. Change management was invariably difficult but the Authority had to embrace change as an organisation. Consultants Price Waterhouse Coopers had been brought in to assume a 'critical friend;' role as officers did not have the capacity or project management skills to undertake the work of renewing the Powys Change Plan. Workshops have been held with staff, Executive Management Team, Portfolio Holders and Heads of Service.

Initially 211 projects were identified but the Plan has prioritized 38 for Phase 1. Residual projects have been incorporated into service strategies where appropriate.

A communication strategy had been approved and staff and residents would be fully informed about the Plan.

The Plan identified Activities and the Measures required to monitor implementation. Initially progress will be reported in October. Some projects may require investment in the early stages. Councillor Fitzpatrick was pleased to note that all Portfolio Holders had taken ownership of the Plan and he was confident that every section of the Plan could be challenged. Further work was

being undertaken regarding the governance of the various programme boards to ensure that direct lines of communication are in place.

It was noted that there were major risks where a partner did not come on board but Councillor Fitzpatrick was confident that the Authority could drive the Plan forward. Although there was no guarantee of funds the Medium Term Financial Plan had been assessed and prepared to ensure the Plan was feasible.

It was suggested that the Powys Change Plan be included as a standard item on future agendas for this meeting and that the implementation should be monitored through the appropriate Scrutiny Committees.

Councillor Brunt had been approached regarding his views on funding being moved from rural areas to urban areas. Councillor Fitzpatrick agreed to follow this up with the Strategic Director Finance and Infrastructure.

#### **4. Performance Management.**

It is the intention that the scrutiny committees receive the performance reports which are received by Cabinet once Cabinet have considered them. The reports will be prepared on a Portfolio basis rather than a service area basis and will be accessible online after they have been considered by Cabinet.

It was confirmed that scrutiny has a two-fold role both in pre-decision scrutiny and post-decision monitoring.

Members pointed out that to date items for the work programme had been identified from performance management reports (ie post-decision scrutiny) but that it had been difficult to identify items for pre-decision scrutiny as the work programme had, to date, been sparse. The requirement for the Cabinet to publish a full work programme should assist this but ultimately it was the portfolio holders decision whether or not a policy should be subject to pre-decision scrutiny.

#### **5. Allocation of Work/Work Programmes**

##### **(i) Cabinet**

It was noted that the work programme did not cover all portfolios and appeared to primarily relate to only three portfolio holders. The Cabinet work programme should be informed by the Powys Change Plan.

It was agreed that the four scrutiny committee Chairs write a letter to the Leader of the Cabinet expressing concern that the work programme was incomplete and that a full work programme should be produced at the earliest opportunity in line with requirements.

## **(ii) Scrutiny Committees**

### Modernisation and Improvement

In addition to the work programme circulated the committee are also looking at sickness absence across services. For the remainder of 2011 Treasury Management will also remain with this Committee to fit better with Cabinet dates but from 2012 Treasury Management will be considered by the Audit Committee only.

### Children, Social Care and Health

After the first meeting it had become apparent that five meetings a year was insufficient and Members had requested monthly meetings. The Clerk advised that it had been possible to diary 9 meetings for 2012 avoiding May (elections), August (holiday period) and December (Christmas).

### Learning and Leisure

The Chair would consider the work programme after the meeting.

### Environment, Crime and Disorder

In addition to the work programme circulated the committee were looking at Winter Maintenance. An Officer Group had been set up in light of the previous two winters and Members from the scrutiny committee had been invited to attend the group. The Committee were also looking at the Regeneration Strategy and Workspace.

### Audit Committee

The work programme for Audit follows an annual cycle but the next meeting would be looking again at Direct Payments and Grants to Voluntary Bodies both of which had received poor audit opinions.

## **(ii) Chairs and Vice Chairs**

To add the Powys Change Plan to each future meeting as an information item for monitoring,

## **6. Local Government Measure 2011**

The Scrutiny Services Manager advised that the Local Measure had received Royal Assent on 10<sup>th</sup> May and guidance was now being prepared. A draft implementation timetable had been produced. The Local Government Measure included the following items:-

- A survey of all councillors and candidates
- Remote attendance

- Annual reports by Members
- Training and development
- Democratic Services Committee and Head of Democratic Services
- A number of additional requirements for scrutiny committees
- A number of requirements relating to Town and Community Councils

**7. Training needs for Members following the introduction of new political structures**

The Scrutiny Services Manager invited Members to submit requests for training.

**8. LSB minutes 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

The LSB minutes were received. This should remain as a standard item on the Joint Chairs agenda but that more up-to-date minutes should be available.

**9. Joint working update**

The Local Government Measure had given powers to create joint scrutiny committees and this would be explored where joint working was being undertaken.

**10. Items for the next meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2011 – 10.00am**

- Election of Chair
- Election of Vice-Chair
- Powys Change Plan
- More recent LSB minutes