

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

13<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2012 – COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS.

**PRESENT:** County Councillors W.T. Jones, Mrs K.S. Silk, A.W. Davies, J.G. Morris and D.R. Jones (Executive Leader).

## **Officers:**

Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), Clarence Meredith (Strategic Director – Law and Governance), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager), Clare Williams (Head of Finance), Lisa Richards and Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officers), Emma Palmer (Business Support Manager)

### **1. Election of Chair.**

As the group was not yet fully constituted it was agreed that County Councillor W.T. Jones be elected Chair for the meeting.

### **2. Apologies.**

County Councillors Michael Jones and Maureen Mackenzie, Janet Kealey (Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services), Geoff Petty (Strategic Director – Finance and Infrastructure).

### **3. Notes of Last Meeting.**

#### **Documents Considered:**

- 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2012.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Received

### **4. Discussion with the Executive Leader, County Councillor David Jones.**

#### **Documents Considered:**

- Cabinet Work Programme
- People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.
- Environment, Infrastructure and Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

#### **Issues Discussed:**

- Executive Leader discussed areas where scrutiny could undertake research to assist the Council and the Cabinet.
- Scrutiny has role in sorting myth from reality when there are issues to be resolved.
- Scrutiny could undertake some useful work e.g. small schools / closure of small schools / school transport – is there a limit to how far you can transport children before a new school is needed? What are appropriate travel distances? There is no research available on this subject and scrutiny could undertake some work on this as the proposals for school transport are not to be implemented until 2014.
- Development corridor in Powys is situated down the centre of the County – and focussed on large towns – should transport development be down that corridor as well?

- Scrutiny should not develop policy, Cabinet develops the policy and then scrutiny can look at it.
- Adult Social Care - a time bomb waiting – will have an effect on the health service as well. The current model of health is not sustainable and could put more pressure on local authorities i.e. with less emphasis on hospital care, more to be undertaken in the community. Local authorities will need to identify resources on how they are going to do this.
- Powys has a rapidly growing elderly population – will affect all Council policies e.g. care and planning. Social Care White paper will impact on this as well. Local Development Plan population projections available. Finance to start work on projections. Census data to be issued next week.
- Shrinking school numbers and changes to school standards with the Minister focussing on school standards.
- The Authority has traditionally spent significant sums on education, and, whilst a few top performers achieve good results, this is not evident throughout the general school population.
- Increase in numbers of pupils attending special schools, even with falling birth rates – increasing cost of special school education by comparison to primary schools.
- Is there a correlation between critical mass i.e. school size, in secondary schools and school standards – there is a correlation between deficit budgets and standards.
- Need to look at regional issues in the long term – horizon gazing is a good role for scrutiny.
- Regional methodology for schools and effectiveness – is there a new bureaucracy being imposed at a regional level – or is it about raising standards based on excellence across the region. Do we need effectiveness officers or challenge schools to raise effectiveness?
- Cabinet Work Programme:
  - needs to focus on strategic issues – if a Portfolio Holder feels that an issue is important then it should be brought to Cabinet, but normally should be able to deal with items individually.
  - strategies for leisure not in programme although in Scrutiny Work Programme for September.
  - Pre-scrutiny – need for scrutiny to know when matters are being considered.
  - 2 policies Cabinet will be considering – regeneration and localism e.g. changes to British Waterways Board to Canal and River Trust could have implications for Powys.
- Regeneration – scrutiny needs to monitor implementation of strategy and the impact on the economy of Powys.
- Impact of new committee structure on attendance of Cabinet members at Scrutiny and Audit Committees explained.

### **Outcomes:**

- People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – move leisure strategy from September to December.
- Scrutiny Chairs to continue attending Cabinet at Chair's own discretion.
- Scrutiny Chairs to attend Local Service Board as observers.
- Scrutiny Manager to forward copies of Local Service Board agenda papers to both Scrutiny Committee Chairs.
- Bring items discussed back to Joint Chairs and assess for inclusion in work programme.

Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group thanked the Executive Leader for attending the meeting and for his views.

**5. Attendance of Scrutiny / Audit Chairs and Vice-Chairs at Cabinet.**

Considered in item 4.

**6. Attendance of Scrutiny Chairs at meetings of the Local Service Board.**

Considered in item 4.

**7. Work Programmes.**

Considered in item 4.

**8. Discussion on role of Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group.**

**Documents Considered:**

- None

**Issues Discussed:**

- Monitoring of delivery of outcomes of Powys Change Plan / One Powys Plan / Local Service Board / Finance and Performance Reports – Steering Group to have superficial view initially and give work out to the scrutiny and audit committees. This role will be developed in future.
- Work being undertaken by the Business and Performance Unit on Performance data and reporting of that data.
- Capacity issues raised in terms of scrutiny support and capacity of Members to undertake workload.

**9. Special Meeting.**

**Outcomes:**

- None of the dates suggested were suitable.

**10. Meeting dates.**

**Outcomes:**

- 6<sup>th</sup> September needed to be cancelled.
- Meeting to be arranged for 13<sup>th</sup> September which would be an all day meeting.
- Next meetings:
- 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2012
- 6<sup>th</sup> December meeting would need to be changed.

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