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Joint Chairs Steering Group – 24 May 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE JOINT CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS STEERING GROUP HELD AT COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON TUESDAY, 24 MAY 2016

PRESENT: County Councillor D R Jones (Chair), S C Davies JG Morris, D R Jones, S C Davies and Mr J Brautigam

In Attendance: County Councillors W B Thomas, R G Brown, S Hayes, E A Jones, W T Jones and W J T Powell

Officers: J Patterson, Chief Executive, P Griffiths, Strategic Director, Place D Powell, Strategic Director Resources, C Pinney, Solicitor to the Council, P Jones, Strategic Programme Manager, W Richards, Scrutiny Manager and E Patterson and L Richards, Scrutiny Officers

1.	ELECTION OF CHAIR	JCSG1 - 2016
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RESOLVED that the Chair of People take the Chair for the ensuing year.

2.	ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR	JCSG2 - 2016
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RESOLVED that the Chair of Place be elected Vice Chair for the ensuing year.

3.	APOLOGIES	JCSG3 - 2016
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Members: County Councillors L V Corfield
Officers:

4.	DRAFT NOTES - FOR CONSIDERATION	JCSG4 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Notes of meeting 12 April 2016

Outcomes:

- **Noted**

5.	DISCUSSION WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR / DIRECTOR REGARDING POTENTIAL SCRUTINY ITEMS	JCSG5 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- None

Issues Discussed:

- Work programming
- Budget – if savings have not been met, research why and whether there are any learning points
- MTFS – some plans are not well defined. These plans should be developed and assist in the development of the Resourcing Plan. Additional consideration needs to be given to ‘service redesign’ and the details of that redesign.
- Constructive challenge and inquiry is useful
- Plans must be more defined
- A role for FSP is being developed which will encompass these areas
- Risks should also be assessed – Resources are expected to deliver £3M savings and consideration must be built into the programme
- Some savings from previous years have still not been achieved. Local Members are frustrated that cuts are imposed due to the approved budget, but those details were never made apparent
- Highways services have to achieve £1.6M savings and specific plans are not yet developed
- The more debate that can be had round an issue could highlight other alternatives enabling better decisions to be made
- Savings have to be delivered within the libraries and leisure services by the end of the financial year and firm proposals will need to be considered by Cabinet in the autumn leaving little time for scrutiny
- Real value could be had by scrutiny evaluating options
- The emphasis must be to drive the programme through Joint Chairs but scrutiny must be flexible to respond
- A suggestion was put that scrutiny should be included within the performance/finance, business intelligence framework which would result in a defined work programme
- Scrutiny should be concentrated on those items where there is the biggest return on investment and, as discussed with Cabinet, should concentrate on the ‘big ticket’ items

Outcomes:

- **Outcomes included in Work Programme item**

6.	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT	JCSG6 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Annual Governance Statement

Issues Discussed:

- The document has expanded over recent years and the format will be reviewed for future years.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Comments on AGS to be forwarded to Peter Jones or Wyn Richards	31 May 2016	Members

7.	CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN	JCSG7 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Draft Corporate Improvement Plan

Issues Discussed:

- The Corporate Improvement Plan draws existing policies together and once agreed will become the corner stone for financial planning

Outcomes

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Comments on the Corporate Improvement Plan to be forwarded to Peter Jones or Wyn Richards	31 May 2016	Members

8.	SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME	JCSG8 - 2016
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Documents Considered:

- Scrutiny Work Programme

Joint discussion with Cabinet:

(Cabinet Members present: County Councillors W B Thomas, W T Jones, R G Brown, E A Jones, S Hayes and W J T Powell)

- The scrutiny work programme has been reviewed and will be prioritised
- During the course of the review a number of items were removed and agreement reached that there should be greater concentration on quality over quantity
- Some items were listed which were considered to be better monitored by Cabinet rather than scrutiny

- There needs to be good communication between Cabinet and Scrutiny to develop both work programmes to be effective
- Pre scrutiny should be used more
- The Cabinet work programme must be sufficiently detailed to enable the scrutiny work programme to be drawn up
- There was an acknowledgement that there would be reports submitted to Cabinet at short notice but these should not be on key decisions
- The Leader suggested that regular meetings with Joint Chairs should take place to ensure a constant dialogue takes place to avoid the current disconnect
- The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care informed the meeting of two major issues to be considered by Cabinet in the summer – Day Centres in mid July and Residential Care in August/September. Whilst he would welcome scrutiny's input, timeliness was essential and there would be a short time frame for scrutiny to comment
- Cabinet would welcome timely and informed information prior to making decisions
- Comments were made that less than 50% of items on the Cabinet work programme were considered as specified – some did not appear to have been considered at all and some may have been integrated into other reports
- It was considered that some items should not be taken to Cabinet but should be subject to Portfolio Holder decision. The Leader acknowledged this but wanted decisions to be open
- Many key decisions are governed by consultation. It was suggested that Scrutiny could become involved during the consultation period
- Many savings are predicated on decisions being made in accordance with a tight timetable
- Some items have been dropped from the Cabinet work programme but the Leader has always been made aware of these issues. Consideration was given to whether scrutiny should also be informed
- Processes need to be streamlined
- Although Key Decisions – requiring advertising for 28 days prior to a decision being made – were not required in Wales, a process could be developed with the same principles
- Reporting needs to be SMARTer and lengthy reports should perhaps contain a summary sheet for general information
- There was general agreement for scrutiny to take place during the consultation period
- Options must be provided together with details of the drivers eg finance
- Cabinet should only consider key decisions – anything else should be determined by Portfolio Holders
- Where a policy has already been agreed, projects should be implemented without reference to Cabinet
- The Chief Executive noted that a number of 'for information' items were appearing on the Cabinet agendas and this would be addressed
- The Portfolio Holder decision process should be refined – decisions are publicized but is this adequate? More Portfolio Holder decisions would free up Cabinet time.

- A Resourcing Plan is being produced and it will be essential to know key dates to develop the Plan. However, political discussion also needs to be factored in to that timetable
- It was suggested that too much time was spent on why things did not work rather than concentrate on what did work
- A review of publicity should be undertaken following the demise of the Red Kite – is Facebook working, are any positives reported through the Helpdesk etc
- There was a need to maintain momentum in moving forward. The majority of officers were committed to transformation but a minority may not be the senior management team are working against that. The right challenge and scrutiny is essential but the momentum must be maintained
- A further suggestion was made that high profile decisions could be subject to dialogue with scrutiny in the early days – this would inform debate on which options were included for formal consultation
- A Member commented that some Members were also resistant to change
- Scrutiny could benefit from its own or joint press released with Cabinet and this was accepted by the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for communications
- The Joint Chairs Steering Group had been concerned at the amount of scrutiny coming forward and the reporting process being too late to enable scrutiny to take place. The Solicitor to the Council suggested that a briefing paper could be prepared on options for key decisions which could also be considered by scrutiny
- Consideration was given to scrutiny attending the Commissioning and Procurement Board as observers and whether the minutes of that Board should be sent to scrutiny committee chairs for information. It was agreed that a work programme should be developed and that all information should be channelled through Joint Chairs to ensure the work programme was adequately developed
- The capacity of both Members and Officers was of concern – the resource was limited and must be used in the most effective way. There was agreement that the resource must be concentrated on the ‘big ticket’ items.
- It was noted that information was not always forthcoming – the Senior Management Team and appropriate Portfolio Holder should be informed of such occurrences. A system of escalation should be agreed.
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance had also taken on responsibility for scrutiny and he sought the approval of the Joint Chairs Steering Group for his attendance at scrutiny committees and the Steering Group as an observer when possible. There were no objections raised to the proposal.

After Cabinet Members had left the meeting the Joint Chair and Senior Management Team considered the priorities for each item. All top priorities would be further prioritized once dates had been included in the work programme

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
A process for scrutiny procedures to be drafted and circulated for comments	1 June 2016	Wyn Richards

The scrutiny work programme to be prioritized in line with the discussion	24 May 2016	Joint Chairs Steering Group
Top priority items to be reviewed when a timetable has been agreed with Strategic Directors	24 June 2016	Wyn Richards

9.	PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD	JCSG9 - 2016
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9.1. Draft Notes of Previous Meeting(s)

Documents Considered:

- Draft notes of final LSB – 10 March 2016

Outcomes:

- **Noted**

9.2. PSB Dates - For Information

- 9 June 2016
- 22 September 2016
- 1 December 2016

10.	DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS - FOR INFORMATION	JCSG10 - 2016
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- 5 July 2016
- 13 September 2016
- 18 October 2016
- 29 November 2016

County Councillor