

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

6<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2012 – COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS.

**PRESENT:** County Councillors Mrs K.S. Silk (Chair)  
County Councillors Mrs M. Mackenzie, Mrs D. Bailey, E. Michael Jones, J.G. Morris and Mrs S. Davies.

**Officers:**

Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager), Lisa Richards and Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officers), Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), Clarence Meredith (Strategic Director – Law and Governance), Nick Philpott (Head of ICT and Customer Services).

**1. Apologies.**

County Councillors W.T. Jones and A.W. Davies, Geoff Petty (Strategic Director – Finance and Infrastructure), Janet Kealey (Head of Legal, Scrutiny and Democratic Services), Clare Williams (Head of Finance).

**2. Notes of Last Meeting.**

**Documents Considered:**

- 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2012.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Item 8 – Local Service Board – Strategic Health Improvement Group. The Chief Executive reported that this group had never met and its retention was being reviewed as part of the work to rationalise partnerships in the County.

**Outcomes:**

- Received.

**3. Highlight Report.**

**Documents Considered:**

- Highlight Report – Quarter 2 – 2012 - 2013.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Inspection reports – how many actions implemented and by when.
- Linkages between the various sections of the report.
- Revised Estyn comments and 6 actions need to be included plus the 5 original recommendations. Challenge to Members and the Council is that what the Council is doing is inadequate and it is not changing quickly enough.
- New information should be included at the front of the report, older information at back of report as background.
- Process needs to look at Estyn reports and identify trends. Financial reports require accountants to highlight risks and opportunities so that there are no surprises later in the financial year.
- Regeneration – no mention of Powys Growth Zones – information taken from the current Powys Change Plan prior to Growth Zones being agreed. In terms of regeneration scrutiny should be considering if the strategy is the correct plan as well as will it deliver – are the outcomes the correct ones and how does the

Council measure that it is making a difference. Is there evidence to support all of this.

- The highlight report needs to look at the gaps rather than the detail.
- Information needs to be more current and present an overview.
- There is a need for the Council to grasp issues sooner and address them.
- Budget variances – there have been changes in response to WAO criticisms but whilst the position is improving the work is not yet completed.
- The revised version of the report needs to show where scrutiny committees need to focus next i.e. has the Council got the right plans and will they deliver. The main issues to consider are outcomes and how they are measured, and in addition the Council's own self assessment and whether it is robust and realistic.
- Scrutiny should focus on the Powys Change Plan. The Cabinet has prepared its statement of intent. Scrutiny should consider whether these are the correct issues and are the outcomes the right ones.
- Head of ICT and Customer Services to discuss content of Highlight report with Scrutiny Manager.
- Need for an improved dissemination of information to Members.
- Public engagement and consultation – use of PAVO. WAO critical that the Council needs to do more. Scrutiny has a role in ensuring that there has been engagement and consultation – customer satisfaction survey and resident's survey to be presented to all Members of the Council.

**Outcomes:**

- Agenda – January – single item - consideration of Cabinet's Statement of Intent.

**4. Assessment of Work Programme Items.**

**Documents Considered:**

- Overview.
- New assessment – Local Development Plan
- Feedback on current reviews in progress.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Members expressed concerns regarding attendances at Working Group meetings – suggested that this be referred to Standards Committee for consideration.
- Job Evaluation – this is a high profile item and as scrutiny was involved in the process previously in overseeing the work of the Programme Board it was suggested that scrutiny's involvement should continue up to the implementation of job evaluation in April. This would also demonstrate that scrutiny was involved in key areas of Council work.
- Scrutiny involvement in appeals process relating to job evaluation – No.
- Question was raised regarding if scrutiny found that there were issues with the process would this also raise questions about the outcome. Scrutiny's role was to review the process only and not consider individual posts.
- Chairs to provide the Strategic Director – Law and Governance with names of representatives on the Working Group.
- Overview – scoring may need to be adjusted on assessment list to further refine numbers of items considered for review.
- Feedback on current reviews – noted.

**Outcomes:**

- Chairs to provide the Strategic Director – Law and Governance with names of representatives on the Job Evaluation Working Group.
- Add LDP to the list of reviews to be undertaken.
- Revise scoring on assessment sheet for consideration by Joint Chairs.

**5. Discussion with Chief Executive regarding Potential Scrutiny Items.**

This had already been covered in the discussions under item 3 – Highlight Report above.

**6. Staffing Resources for Scrutiny – Management Team response.**

The Chief Executive advised the Joint Chairs that he had spoken to the Cabinet and Group Leaders relating to a new operating model for the Council, which was not about new staff but redirecting resources. The aim was to have the new arrangements in place by April 2013 although some changes could occur in the interim.

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

**Documents Considered:**

- Self Evaluation document submitted to the Wales Audit Office.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Feedback from the Regional Workshop held on 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2012.
- Possible additional review information from Strategic Directors and Heads of Service about the current view of scrutiny which could be fed into the WAO review process, and the Powys self evaluation.
- House of Commons Training for Scrutiny Members.

**Outcomes:**

- Noted.
- Dates for training to be arranged with the House of Commons staff who would provide the training for Members.

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

**Issues Discussed:**

- Last meeting was an additional meeting and a waste of time as Chief Executive and Leader were not available to attend.
- Previous meetings of the LSB were also not productive.
- LSB in Powys is not working and future prospects are not good either. Therefore there were concerns regarding the delivery of the One Powys Plan.
- Concerns that with reduction in membership of the LSB how are important issues such as Housing in South Powys and Education going to be driven forward without the involvement of the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and Coleg Powys.
- Powys County Council's Leader will chair meetings from now on. Police Commissioner will also attend these meetings.
- Scrutiny representatives should attempt to measure the success of the LSB at the next meeting.

**Outcomes:**

- Scrutiny Manager to feed back the concerns of the Chair to the Chief Executive regarding the operation of the LSB.

**9. Dates for next meetings.**

- 11<sup>th</sup> January, 2013
- 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2013
- 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2013
- 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2013
- 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2013
- 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2013
- 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 2013
- 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2013
- 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013
- 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2013

**10. LSB Meeting Dates.**

- 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2013
- 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2013
- 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2013
- 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2013

**County Councillor Mrs K.S. Silk  
Chair**