

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

14 JUNE 2013 – COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS

**PRESENT:** County Councillors R.G. Thomas (Chair).

County Councillors Mrs M Mackenzie, E M Jones, A W Davies, Mrs S Davies, and Mrs D Bailey.

**Officers:**

Nick Philpott (Director – Change and Governance), Peter Jones (Programme Office Manager), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager), Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officer).

The Chair paid tribute to County Councillor Wynne Jones as the previous Chair of the Steering Group.

**1. Vice-Chair.**

As not all of the Vice-Chairs had been appointed it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

**Outcomes:**

- **Agenda item for next meeting.**

**2. Apologies**

County Councillors W.T. Jones, J.G. Morris, Geoff Petty (Strategic Director – Resources), Clive Pinney (Council Solicitor), Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer).

**3. Notes of Last Meeting**

**Documents Considered:**

- 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2013

**Issues Discussed:**

- Page 5 – Item 7 - Consultants – Audit Committee was looking at this. Some costs should be recharged to organisations such as the Trunk Road Agency.

**Outcomes:**

- **Received**

**4. Improving Governance Project**

**Documents Considered:**

- None.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Presentation received.
- Staff engagement surveys being undertaken to engage with staff about changes in the Council. There will be an emphasis on communications arising from the project.
- There should be a better use of staff in the self evaluation process.

- Scrutiny has a role in driving the improvement process – challenging and driving improvement in a positive environment rather than establishing blame.
- Equality Impact Assessment – role for scrutiny here also. Information grids will make services look at issues such as sustainability, equality, Welsh Language etc. Scrutiny can assist in identifying where resources should be targeted, and a need to look at weighting of these issues by comparison to others.

**Outcomes:**

- **Noted.**

## **5. Powys Change Plan / Annual Performance Report**

**Documents Considered:**

- Process for Publishing the Powys Change Plan Stage 2 – 2011/3 – 16.
- Annual Performance Evaluation Grid April 2012 – March 2013.
- Scrutiny of Information Grids.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Previously, near finished report presented to the Steering Group for comment.
- Concern by Members about the lack of time provided to effectively consider the report.
- Concern by regulators regarding the lack of self evaluation by the Council.
- Good example of challenge role seen in the ACRF (Annual Council Reporting Framework) process which could be used in relation to the Annual Improvement Report.
- For Powys Change Plan, information grids to be produced and sent out to services / programmes for completion.
- There will be greater detail in the grids than in the final report, and will provide more information for Members to challenge.
- The information from the grids will form the final report.
- It was suggested that the grids be distributed to current Working Groups to undertake the scrutiny, and the other grids could be undertaken by 2 groups formed from the Steering Group.
- The scrutiny challenge can provide some of the challenge to portfolio holders in relation to the achievement of outcomes by their services.
- Services are looking to populate information grids from forthcoming plans in future years.
- Principles of scrutiny challenge to be circulated to groups when information grids to be scrutinised.

**Outcomes:**

- **Circulate draft grids to Steering Group for information, in particular those which will be undertaken by the groups formed from the Steering Group.**
- **Commissioning and Procurement Grid – Chair of the Audit Committee to be a member of that group.**

## **6. Joint Scrutiny Committees**

**Documents Considered:**

- Summary of the Statutory Guidance arising from the Local Government Measure 2011.

**Issues Discussed:**

- There is a need for pilot regional working arrangements to start the process of regional scrutiny.
- Central Wales In Collaboration (CWIC) – Powys and Ceredigion County Councils – had asked about how joint scrutiny could operate.

**Outcomes:**

- **Noted.**
- **Discuss joint arrangements with other Councils with the Leader.**

**7. Discussion with Chief Executive regarding potential Scrutiny Items.**

This item was deferred.

**8. Good Scrutiny? Good Question! – Wales Audit Office Scrutiny Improvement Study.****Documents Considered:**

- None.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Revised self assessment completed and submitted to Wales Audit Office by 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2013.
- Powys final position improved over the last 6 months since the initial self assessment was completed.
- Draft “Characteristics of Good Scrutiny” to be revised by officers with work to be completed by the end of August, 2013.
- Once the characteristics of good scrutiny had been revised, Councils would prepare an action plan as to how it was intended to improve scrutiny. This would be monitored by the Wales Audit Office.
- The action plan would also tie to the improving scrutiny element of the Improving Governance Project.
- The characteristics of good scrutiny would be discussed by the Joint Chairs Steering Group, the 2 scrutiny and the Audit committees, the Cabinet and the Management Team as it was essential that there was buy in from all parts of the Council to the improvement of scrutiny.

**Outcomes:**

- **Noted.**

**9. Local Service Board.****Documents Considered:**

- None.

**Issues Discussed:**

- Concern that scrutiny of the LSB currently limited to observing meetings. Need to discuss this at next meeting when Cllr Wynne Jones was present.

**Outcomes:**

- **Item for next meeting.**

## **10. Protocol for Production of Scrutiny Reports.**

### **Documents Considered:**

- Draft Protocol for Scrutiny Reports.

### **Issues Discussed:**

- Document welcomed and approved to provide greater flexibility in the way that scrutiny operates.
- Programme Office Manager raised issue about how the Council picks up recommendations from scrutiny and takes them forward to provide outcomes and improvement.
- It was suggested that there would be a need to divide scrutiny recommendations into high level recommendations which could be included in the tracker being developed by the Programme Office and those which were of a lower level and not tracked.

### **Outcomes:**

- **Draft Protocol Approved.**
- **Scrutiny Recommendations to be split in scrutiny reports between those that would be included in the tracker and those that would not.**

## **11. Annual Governance Statement Working Group.**

### **Documents Considered:**

- None.

### **Issues Discussed:**

- The Steering Group considered that a Member of the Steering Group should be a member of the Annual Governance Statement Working Group.

### **Outcomes:**

- **Chair or Vice-Chair of the Steering Group to represent the Steering Group on the Working Group.**

## **12. WLGA Scrutiny Chairs Network.**

### **Documents Considered:**

- None.

### **Issues Discussed:**

- Dates of the WLGA Scrutiny Chairs Network received. It was noted that the Corporate Policy and Performance network on 24<sup>th</sup> June had been postponed.

### **Outcomes:**

- **Chair or Vice-Chair or relevant Lead Member as approved by the Chair to attend the Scrutiny Chairs Network meetings.**

## **13. Work Programme.**

### **Documents Considered:**

- Draft Work Programme.

**Outcomes:**

- **Noted.**

**14. Dates of future meetings**

- 2 August 2013
- 20 September 2013 (moved from 13<sup>th</sup> September)
- 23 October 2013
- 29 November 2013

**Outcomes:**

- **20<sup>th</sup> September meeting – Apology Cllr Maureen Mackenzie.**
- **23<sup>rd</sup> October meeting – possibly move this meeting to 25<sup>th</sup> October.**

**15. LSB Meeting Dates**

- 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2013
- 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 (Conference)
- 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2013
- 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2013
- 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

**County Councillor R.G. Thomas  
Chair**