

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

18 JULY 2014 – COMMITTEE ROOM A, COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS

PRESENT: County Councillor S.C. Davies (Chair).
County Councillors E.Michael Jones, A.W. Davies, and W.T. Jones.

County Councillor T.J. Van-Rees and County Councillor W.B. Thomas (by telephone) for item 3 only.

Officers:

David Powell (Strategic Director – Resources), Clive Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), Wyn Richards (Scrutiny Manager), Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer), Liz Patterson (Scrutiny Officer), Peter Jones (Programme Office Manager), Bets Ingram (Strategic Planning Officer / Business Intelligence Officer) (for item 3 only).

1. Apologies

County Councillors - County Councillor J.G. Morris, T. Turner, R.G. Thomas and M.J. Dorrance.

Officers – Jeremy Patterson (Chief Executive), Paul Griffiths (Strategic Director – Place), Nick Philpott (Director – Change and Governance), Amanda Lewis (Strategic Director – People).

2. Notes of Last Meeting

Documents Considered:

- 16th May, 2014

Issues Discussed:

- A tracker should be produced to progress agreed actions.
- The Commissioning and Procurement Project needs to be progressed as a matter of urgency. 3rd party spending, income generation and the establishment of the Commercial Services Team should be included in the remit. There would also be a need to identify a lead Director / senior officer for the project.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
A tracker to progress agreed actions to be established.	End of July 2014	WR
Commissioning and Procurement Project to be progressed.	April 2015	WR / DP / LR

3. Workshop Session – Annual Performance Assessment – Performance Evaluation Grids.

Documents Considered:

- Performance Evaluation Grid for the Council Programme.

Issues Discussed:

- 13 Commitments discussed. Where possible relevant officers provided feedback to questions raised by the Joint Chairs. Detailed comments made in relation to the evidence provided, e.g. such as the need to improve the level of detail provided, were noted by Performance Officers and would be considered for inclusion in the Annual Performance Report produced following the completion of the challenge events.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Draft Annual Performance Report to be considered by the Steering Group at the next meeting	19 th September, 2014	PJ / WR

4. Proposed Support Project – Budget and Finance Scrutiny.

Documents Considered:

- Joint report of the Scrutiny Manager and Head of Democratic Services and the Strategic Director – Resources.
- Discussion Paper – Standing Budget Research and Evaluation Panel – Wales Scrutiny Programme Manager, Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS).

Issues Discussed:

- This arose from a discussion between the Chair of the Audit Committee and the Strategic Director – Resources with Rebecca David-Knight, Wales Scrutiny Programme Manager regarding support which could be provided to the Council to improve the scrutiny of the budget and finance.
- The discussion paper outlined the support which could be provided not only by the CfPS but also by other organisations such as the Local Government Data Unit, the WLGA and CIFPA.
- The covering report asked whether there was a role for the Joint Chairs Steering Group in driving and co-ordinating the project, and also discussed how this linked into the scrutiny of the Local Service Board, better engagement with all Members and the way that scrutiny was undertaken in the Council.
- It was suggested that if a Panel was established as outlined in the discussion paper there would need to be interaction with the Cabinet at some point in the process. It would also be necessary to advise the CfPS of the scrutiny arrangements in Powys where leadership groups did not control a chair of a scrutiny committee.
- The Steering Group supported the establishment of a Panel comprising members of the Audit Committee together with the chairs of the scrutiny committees and the Leaders of non-Executive Political Groups, with arrangements to be reviewed after 12 months.
- Members discussed the current scrutiny arrangements as well as possible alternative models as used by other Councils but did not come to any conclusions regarding amending the current committee structure. However the Steering Group did agree that the terms of reference of the Steering Group should be revised and discussed at the next meeting.
- The Steering Group also agreed that the offer of support from the CfPS, at no cost to the Council should be accepted.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
That a Panel to undertake budget and finance scrutiny be established comprising Members of the Audit Committee together with the chairs of the scrutiny committees and Group Leaders of Non-Executive Groups, to be reviewed following 12 months of operation.	September 2014	DP / WR
That the support offered by the CfPS at no cost to the Council as detailed in the discussion paper be taken up.	September 2014	DP / WR
That the terms of reference of the Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group be amended and considered at the next meeting of the Steering Group.	19 th September, 2014	WR / CP

5. New Constitution – Section 7 – Scrutiny Committees.

Documents Considered:

- Draft Section 7 of the New Constitution – Scrutiny Committees.

Issues Discussed:

- Pages 2 to 3 – the responsibilities of the committees as listed were incorrect and should be revised to reflect the current structure.
- Rule 7.21 onwards – there was a need to clarify the role of working groups and their non-political nature, how they should seek to have representation from as many political groups as possible, and how they could be established by the Chair of a Scrutiny Committee.
- The revision to the terms of reference of the Steering Group as agreed in Item 4 above would need to be incorporated into this section of the new Constitution.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Revise pages 2 to 3 of the Section to reflect the roles and responsibilities of the current scrutiny committees.		WR / CP
Clarify the role of working groups, their establishment and the non-political nature of those groups.		WR / CP
Include the revised terms of reference of the Steering Group in this Section of the Constitution.		WR / CP

6. Assessments of Work Programme Items.

Documents Considered:

- Overview Report.

Issues Discussed:

- There had been concern raised by the Wales Audit Office in its Annual Improvement Report issued in July 2014 in relation to the achievement of its Welsh Language Scheme targets by the Council and the lack of scrutiny of the

scheme. It was suggested that the People Scrutiny Committee could undertake a spotlight review of the scheme. The Chair indicated that he was considering establishing a “corporate matters” working group and this issue could be considered by that group.

- Welfare Reform Strategy – the revision of this strategy was nearing completion and it was suggested that it should be scrutinised prior to consideration by the Cabinet. This could be undertaken by the People Scrutiny Committee’s “corporate matters” working group.
- The Cabinet had requested that scrutiny reviews the options in respect of a replacement congress system for the Council. The Steering Group was unclear as to whether the Cabinet wanted scrutiny to provide options or recommendations and what the terms of reference of the review were. It was suggested that the Leader be asked to clarify the terms of reference for scrutiny. A group comprising the four chairs of the committees would undertake the scrutiny once the terms of reference were received from the Leader.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
That the People Scrutiny Committee undertake a spotlight review of the Council’s achievement of its Welsh Language Scheme targets.	March 2015	LP / Cllr WJ
That the People Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the draft revised Welfare Reform Strategy prior to its approval by the Cabinet	October 2014	LP / DP
That the Leader be asked to clarify the terms of reference for the review of the purchase of a Congress System to include terms of reference and whether the Cabinet wanted options or recommendations.	19th September, 2014	WR / Cllr BT
That a working group comprising the four chairs of the committees (Scrutiny, Audit and Democratic Services) undertake the scrutiny of the purchase of a Congress System.	19th September, 2014	WR / CP

7. Discussion with the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors / Director regarding Potential Scrutiny Items.

Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- None – already covered in previous items.

8. Forum for Non-Executive Members.

Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- County Councillor Aled Davies questioned how Members could get their ideas raised into various fora for discussion e.g. any ideas by Members regarding how the Council provided services in a different way. The Local Environment Forums was one way to discuss the delivery of services locally. It was suggested that Shire Committees might be a possible avenue for such discussions. Neighbourhood Management could provide a suitable forum for such discussions as well on a locality basis, but the question was how to capture issues on an all county basis.
- It was suggested that an opportunity for Members to raise ideas with other Members could be provided at the end of Member Development Sessions.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
That an item be included on agendas for Member Development Sessions for Members to raise ideas for discussion.	September, 2014	WR / CJ

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

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- The Steering Group that there had not been a recent meeting of the Local Service Board. It was also noted that the Steering Group was to have received a presentation from Dominique Jones regarding the scrutiny of the LSB which had been postponed due to the volume of items on the agenda.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
That Dominique Jones be invited to the next meeting to provide a presentation regarding the scrutiny of the LSB.	19 th September, 2014	DJ / WR

10. Dates of future meetings

- 19th September, 2014
- 14th November, 2014

11. LSB Meeting Dates

- 25th September, 2014
- 11th December, 2014

12. Confidential Item.**Documents Considered:**

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- **RESOLVED to exclude the public for the following items of business on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of exempt information under category 5 of The Local Authorities (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007)**
- The Solicitor to the Council gave a verbal briefing to Members regarding issues in relation to School Heating Systems and how these issues were being addressed.

13. Other Matters.

Documents Considered:

- None.

Issues Discussed:

- Concern had been expressed by both Members and Officers in relation to the numbers of questions being included on Council agendas. It was suggested that most of the questions could be asked directly to officers rather than being raised on the Council agenda. There was concern that the time being spent by officers responding to questions was diverting them from other work, and it was suggested that possibly Group Leaders should vet questions for their suitability for the Council agenda before they were submitted.
- It was noted that some of the questions arose from the frustration of Members, who having raised these questions several times previously, were not obtaining a response, and therefore had no option but to raise them at full Council. It was suggested that Members who were in this situation should indicate that when the question was raised on the Council agenda. The new Council Constitution included a limit of 2 questions per Member per Council session.

Outcomes:

Action	Completion Date	Action By
Group Leaders to discuss the issue of the number of questions raised on Council agendas.		

**County Councillor S.C. Davies
Chair**

List of Actions Arising from the Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group meeting on 18th July, 2014.

Action	Completion Date	Action By	Completed / Notes
A tracker to progress agreed actions to be established.	End of July 2014	WR	
Commissioning and Procurement Project to be progressed.	April 2015	WR / DP / LR	
Draft Annual Improvement Report to be considered by the Steering Group at the next meeting	19th September, 2014	PJ / WR	
That a Panel to undertake budget and finance scrutiny be established comprising Members of the Audit Committee together with the chairs of the scrutiny committees and Group Leaders of Non-Executive Groups, to be reviewed following 12 months of operation.	September 2014	DP / WR	
That the support offered by the CfPS at no cost to the Council as detailed in the discussion paper be taken up.	September 2014	DP / WR	
That the terms of reference of the Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs Steering Group be amended and considered at the next meeting of the Steering Group.	19th September, 2014	WR / CP	
Revise pages 2 to 3 of the Section to reflect the roles and responsibilities of the current scrutiny committees.		WR / CP	
Clarify the role of working groups, their establishment and the non-political nature of those groups.		WR / CP	
Include the revised terms of reference of the Steering Group in this Section of the Constitution.		WR / CP	
That the People Scrutiny Committee undertake a spotlight review of the Council's achievement of its Welsh Language Scheme targets.	March 2015	LP / Cllr WJ	
That the People Scrutiny Committee scrutinise the draft revised Welfare Reform Strategy prior to its approval by the Cabinet	October 2014	LP / DP	

That the Leader be asked to clarify the terms of reference for the review of the purchase of a Congress System to include terms of reference and whether the Cabinet wanted options or recommendations.	19th September, 2014	WR / Cllr BT	
That a working group comprising the four chairs of the committees (Scrutiny, Audit and Democratic Services) undertake the scrutiny of the purchase of a Congress System.	19th September, 2014	WR / CP	
That an item be included on agendas for Member Development Sessions for Members to raise ideas for discussion.	September, 2014	WR / CJ	
That Dominique Jones be invited to the next meeting to provide a presentation regarding the scrutiny of the LSB.	19th September, 2014	DJ / WR	
Group Leaders to discuss the issue of the number of questions raised on Council agendas.			