

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014-2015**

**COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

10TH SEPTEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF
LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

Agenda Item No 5

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PRE-MEETINGS

Author: Mrs A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer
Tel No: 01443 424102

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- update Members in relation to the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Working Group set up to consider the findings and recommendations of the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report "Good Scrutiny? Good Question!";
- inform the Committee of the Working Group's initial recommendations in relation to scrutiny pre-meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note the information provided;
- (ii) agree to the introduction of full committee member pre-meetings as set out at Section 4.3 of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 At the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 9th June 2014, the Committee considered the report of the Wales Audit Office "Good Scrutiny? Good Question!" The report is the culmination of their all Wales Scrutiny Improvement Study and sets out the findings and recommendations. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to form a working group to consider the report in more detail and this working group met for the first time on 16th July 2014.

4. PRE-MEETINGS: BEST PRACTICE

4.1 At its first meeting, the Working Group identified a number of key issues for consideration. Amongst its findings, the WAO study points to

the benefits of holding pre-meetings for all committee Members to prepare for the scrutiny committee meetings and the Working Group decided to prioritise this issue and following consideration formed a number of conclusions with regard to the operation of pre-meetings. These recommendations and best practice proposals were then endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which recommended that a report be presented to each of the service scrutiny committees in September with a view to introducing pre meetings for all scrutiny committees in October, subject to each committee's agreement.

- 4.2 The Community & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has been piloting pre-meetings and the feedback from this experience was used to inform the scrutiny working group, along with a range of information gathered from other authorities.
- 4.3 The recommendations for best practice are set out below:
- That pre-meetings be introduced to all scrutiny committees subject to their agreement;
 - That the pre-meetings should not be open to the public;
 - Pre-meetings should take place immediately before the committee meeting;
 - Pre-meetings should be used to guide lines of enquiry and not to provide Members with prepared questions;
 - Pre-meetings should be used to assist Committees in achieving outcomes;
 - It was agreed that feedback on Committee meetings is a useful tool for improvement but rather than formal post committee meetings, feedback could be gathered electronically;
 - That a protocol for Rhondda Cynon Taf be developed based on the Caerphilly Good Practice Guide;
 - Officers providing PowerPoint presentations rather than reports should be asked to provide a summary of their presentation in advance of the meeting to enable Members to prepare;
 - Officers to be encouraged to produce a summary of their report if particularly long and detailed;
 - That the operation of pre-meetings be monitored throughout the year;
- 4.4 A draft Best Practice Guide will be considered by the scrutiny working group at its next meeting in September and subject to agreement circulated to all scrutiny committees.
- 4.5 At its next meeting the scrutiny working group intends to consider the following issues:
- Attendance of Cabinet Members at scrutiny committees;
 - Public Engagement.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

as amended by

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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10TH SEPTEMBER 2014

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

ITEM: REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - SCRUTINY PRE-MEETINGS

Wales Audit Office 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question!': Auditor General for Wales improvement study: Scrutiny in Local Government', May 2014

Min No 10 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee 16th July 2014– Scrutiny Developments

(Officer to Contact: Ann Edwards, Committee Services Officer – Telephone No. 01443 424102

