

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Wednesday, 9th March, 2016 at 5 pm.

Present:

County Borough Councillor M A Norris – in the Chair

County Borough Councillors

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|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| (Mrs) J Bonetto | S Bradwick | G R Davies |
| S Evans | P Griffiths | (Mrs) S Jones |
| (Mrs) C Leyshon | G Smith | (Mrs) J S Ward |
| P Wasley | C J Willis | R Yeo |

In Attendance

Mr R Hull – Chair of the Audit Committee

Officers in Attendance

Mr C Bradshaw – Chief Executive

Mr P Lucas – Director of Legal & Democratic Services

Mr P Griffiths – Service Director, Performance & Improvement

Mrs A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Committee Members County Borough Councillors (Mrs) S Rees, R W Smith and E Webster.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interests made, pertaining to the agenda.

53. MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee subject to noting that at Minute 50 – ‘2015/16 Mid Year Treasury Management Stewardship Report’ – at the end of the debate the Chairman of the Audit Committee withdrew his comment which questioned whether the Committee had the necessary skills to scrutinise Treasury Management reports.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IN DISCUSSION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

54. COUNCIL CORPORATE AND SERVICE SELF EVALUATIONS

The Chief Executive presented his report which updated Members on the progress in further strengthening the Council's planning for improvement processes and the corporate and service self evaluations which had recently been undertaken of the Council and the services it provides.

The Chief Executive reported on the importance of self evaluation and explained that at the heart of self evaluation are three questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How can we improve things further?

The Chief Executive pointed out that there had been no standard model of self evaluation across the Council for a number of years although some service areas had traditionally undertaken self evaluations which have been tested by external regulators. Using methodology taken from Estyn and Audit Scotland, a model of self evaluation was developed and a template created, a copy of which was set out at Appendix A of the report.

The Chief Executive explained that the corporate self evaluation considered the performance of the corporate body of the Council and had been based on the Wales Audit Office questions that are posed to local authorities as part of the WAO's Corporate Assessment audits. He pointed out that the Executive summary of the completed Council corporate self evaluation was set out at Appendix B. He also drew Members' attention to page 41 of the agenda pack which set out the key priority areas for improvement identified as part of the Corporate Self Assessment.

With regard to the service self evaluations, the Chief Executive informed the Committee that the evaluations had been challenged, reviewed and signed off by the respective Cabinet Member and Group Director, and are being subject to an independent challenge by the Deputy Leader and himself. He explained that the service areas that have completed service evaluations were listed at Appendix C.

The Chief Executive explained that the service self evaluation required each service area to:

- Set out 5 key priority actions it will deliver in 2016/17;
- Set out a small number of performance measures and targets from which Members and officers can assess the performance of the service.

The Chief Executive reported that it was intended for the self evaluation process to become an annual event to help ensure that the Council and its services continue to respond to the needs of the communities it serves and deliver essential services well.

With regard to the list of service self evaluations at Appendix C, the Chief Executive suggested that these provided an opportunity for Scrutiny Members to better understand the strengths and areas for improvement within services, and could also help support the development of scrutiny work programmes.

The Chairman proposed that the list of services at Appendix C be split into groups to align with the individual scrutiny committees.

The Committee discussed the report and welcomed the self evaluation process. However, Members highlighted the need for the process to not divert attention from improving outcomes, should not be 'self applauding' and questioned how scrutiny would be able to identify areas of potential work given that there are 35 self evaluations. Members also welcomed the intention to embed self evaluation as an annual process into the Council's Corporate calendar. It was agreed that the information provided through the self evaluation process would be beneficial to scrutiny and it was asked whether designated Cabinet Members would be in attendance when discussed.

The Chief Executive reported that the evaluation process was not intended to be a tick box exercise, was evidenced based and balanced, and would provide the opportunity to challenge performance, targets and the extent of improvement / impact being delivered by the Council's services.

The Chairman questioned the availability of the information and the Chief Executive reported that it was available for Members, albeit the volume was considerable and he suggested whether summarised versions would also be of use.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to accept the corporate self evaluation and endorse the introduction of an annual programme of corporate and service self assessment;
- (ii) to acknowledge the potential usefulness of the resulting information in informing scrutiny work programmes;
- (iii) that the service evaluations be split across the Service Scrutiny Committees and that Scrutiny Members be provided with full and summary versions of the 35 service self evaluations through electronic means.

REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

55. PRE SCRUTINY OF THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement reported on the proposed approach for the pre scrutiny of progress against the Council's 2015/16 priorities and the 2016/17 actions to deliver the priorities as set out in the

Council's Corporate Plan. The Service Director explained that much of the work in the priority areas involved a number of services working together and as such it was considered beneficial to undertake a cross cutting approach and bring elected Members together from a number of different Scrutiny Committees. He also reported on the intention to invite existing co-opted Members and also invite representation from organisations such as OPAG which had assisted in the past to join these groups to provide a user perspective.

The Service Director informed Members of the suggestion put forward by the Chairman of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee who proposed that as some working groups might be oversubscribed that Members may wish to rank their order of preference when informing the scrutiny officers of their intention to be part of the process.

Following presentation of the report, the Committee discussed the proposals. A Member expressed his view that in his opinion this work was not pre-scrutiny in the true sense and he had reservations regarding the worth of the exercise.

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services explained that this work provides the opportunity for Members to scrutinise draft information and 'have a say' in its content before being presented to Council. The Director of Legal & Democratic Services went on to indicate that there will be further opportunities for Members to determine other aspects of the Council's work they wish to pre-scrutinise as part of developing work programmes for 2016/17.

The Service Director, Performance & Improvement added the proposed approach aims to ensure that the scrutiny process continues to be a key part of the Council's performance management arrangements and at the same time further contribute to Members' understanding of this area to aide in-year scrutiny of Corporate Plan priorities.

During the discussion, officers were made aware of several local areas of concern and it was agreed that Members would provide the detail to officers who would investigate.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED:**

- (i) to endorse the way forward as proposed in the report to enable pre-scrutiny of the Council's 2015/16 priorities and 2016/17 priority actions to commence in March 2016;
- (ii) that interested Members should contact the Scrutiny Support Officer and rank their preference in relation to which working group they would wish to sit on.

56. **PREPARATION FOR THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

The Committee was provided with proposals for the composition of the draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for 2015/16 for consideration.

The Scrutiny Support Officer also informed Members that it was the intention for the draft report to go before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in April and that the Chairman would be inviting the scrutiny chairs and vice chairs of the thematic scrutiny committees to attend on the 20th April 2016 to take part in the discussion.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee queried whether there was an expectation on his Committee to contribute.

The Director of Legal & Democratic Services pointed to the importance of the links between scrutiny and the Audit Committee and agreed that it might be appropriate to include this within the document.

The Chairman wished to put on record his thanks to the Scrutiny Support and Democratic Services officers for their assistance during the year.

RESOLVED: to endorse the proposed content of the draft Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report subject to the inclusion of a paragraph setting out the links between the Audit Committee and scrutiny.

M A Norris
Chairman

The meeting closed at 6.25 pm.

