

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES** of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale, on Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at 5 pm.

**Present:**

County Borough Councillor R K Turner – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors:**

H Boggis	S Bradwick	(Mrs) J Cass
(Mrs) M E Davies	(Mrs) C Leyshon	(Mrs) S Rees
R W Smith	G Stacey	G Thomas
C Willis		

**Officers in Attendance:**

Mr P J Lucas – Director of Legal & Democratic Services  
Ms A Edwards – Scrutiny Support Officer

**7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillors G R Davies, P Griffiths, P Jarman and P Wasley.

**8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** to note that in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations of interest made in relation to the agenda.

**9. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

**REPORTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**10. SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services provided the Committee with an update in relation to a number of scrutiny developments.

The Director referred to the Wales Audit Office (WAO) report "Good Scrutiny? Good Question!", which had been reported to Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014. He informed Members that the first meeting of the scrutiny working group set up to consider the report's findings and recommendations in detail had taken place earlier that day. He outlined the way in which the Working Group intended to undertake its task explaining that a number of key issues

had been drawn from the report and it was intended to consider each in more detail on an individual basis. The first meeting of the Working Group had focussed on committee pre-meetings. He further explained that the Working Group had agreed to present any recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as and when each issue was concluded thereby avoiding any delay in improvement action.

The Director explained that as a result of its first meeting, the Working Group had formed a number of conclusions with regard to the operation of pre-meetings and had agreed that the recommendations as set out below be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for ratification, namely:

- 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;
- That should the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be in agreement, that a report be presented to each of the service scrutiny committees in their September cycle informing them of the recommendations of the Working Group and proposing that they be introduced for all scrutiny committees during the October cycle.

The Director explained that a draft good practice guide would be prepared by officers and presented to the next meeting of the Working Group.

The Committee discussed the proposals and Members were assured that absence from a pre-meeting would not prevent a Member asking questions at Committee. The operation of the pre-meetings would also be monitored throughout the year.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services drew Members' attention to section 4 of the report which referred to the Local Service Board Scrutiny Working Group and advised on the need to appoint to the vacancy which has

occurred as a result of Councillor Geraint Hopkins, former vice chairman of the Committee being appointed to the Cabinet.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services also informed Members of a project which would explore the use of performance information to support the accountability and scrutiny of public services by citizens and elected members. He explained that the Council had been approached by the Welsh Government to undertake this work with a view to developing a case study. To support Members in their public engagement role he reported that a development session had been arranged for 24<sup>th</sup> July 2014 which would be delivered by Participation Cymru.

Finally, the Director referred to the recently published White Paper "Reforming Local Government", and pointed out that whilst media attention had been focussed on the content in relation to the merger of local authorities, the document is much broader with an emphasis on governance and scrutiny arrangements. He suggested that the relevant sections of the White Paper be circulated to Members for information.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) to note the information provided;
- (ii) to endorse the recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group "Good Scrutiny? Good Question!" as set out above in relation to the operation of committee pre-meetings;
- (iii) that the vice chairman, County Borough Councillor R Smith be appointed to the LSB Scrutiny Working Group;
- (iv) that Members be provided with a copy of the relevant section of the White Paper "Reforming Local Government" which relates to scrutiny.

**11. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services reported on the preparation of a work programme for the Committee. It was noted that the Committee was still awaiting a response from the Executive to its report on Welfare Reform. It was also pointed out that the work programme is a flexible document and would need to respond to changing priorities.

Following consideration it was **RESOLVED** to agree the draft work programme as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

R K Turner  
Chairman

The meeting closed at 5.55 pm.

